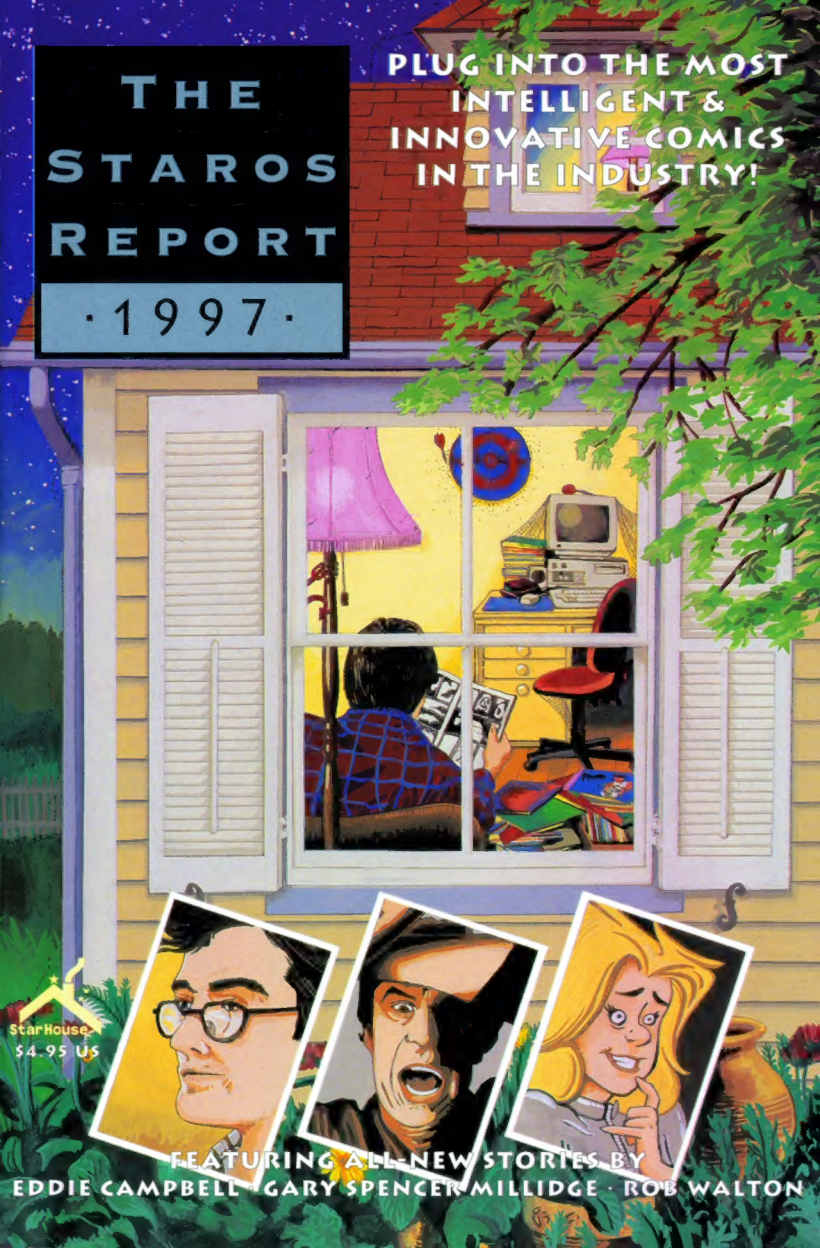
THE STAROS REPORT

·1997·

PLUG INTO THE MOST INTELLIGENT & INNOVATIVE COMICS IN THE INDUSTRY!



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EDDIE CAMPBELL · GARY SPENCER MILLIDGE · ROB WALTON

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• Cover Artwork by & © 1997 Gary Spencer Millidge • Logos & Color Separations by Michael Evans •
• The images of Alec, Alex, and Alice — *spooky!* — are © Eddie Campbell, Gary Spencer Millidge, and Rob Walton respectively •

UH...LOOK CHRIS. I'VE GOT A BAAAD FEELING ABOUT THIS. IF YOU DON'T TAKE A BREATHER SOON AND START WRITING, YOU'RE GONNA BE IN BIG TROUBLE.
X-RAY
STAROS REPORT 1997
I'VE GOT PLENTY OF--WOAH--OH-OHHH!! WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE!?
KANE
STAROS REPORT 1997
PICKLE
SIX DEGR
I WARNED YOU, BUT IT'S TOO LATE. NOW YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO WING IT!
POIT!
OH...UM... HI.

WELCOME... TO THE 1997 EDITION OF THE STAROS REPORT
I'M...AHEM... STANDING HERE IN MY BATHROBE, 'CAUSE... UH... I THOUGHT YOU OUGHT TO SEE THE... UM... TOOLS OF MY TRADE.
YOU SEE,...UM...I LIKE TO BE COMFORTABLE WHEN I READ COMICS.
POIT!
HE LIKES TO BE COMFORTABLE, ALL RIGHT. DO YOU KNOW ANYONE ELSE WHO CUTS THE ELASTIC OFF OF THEIR UNDERWEAR?
COMICS JOURNAL
SORRY. THIS ISN'T EXACTLY HOW I HAD PLANNED TO START THINGS OFF THIS YEAR.
SO JUST LET ME TIDY UP A BIT AND WE'LL GET THINGS ROLLING.
I SHOULD TELL YOU THAT THE STAROS REPORT IS DESIGNED TO BE A GUIDE TO THE MOST INTELLIGENT AND INNOVATIVE COMICS IN THE INDUSTRY.
A KIND OF "OVERSTREET" FOR READERS, RATHER THAN COLLECTORS, IF YOU WILL.
YES
NO
AND IF YOU'RE WONDERING WHY THIS ISSUE IS SO DIFFERENT FROM THE LAST, IT'S MAINLY BECAUSE I WAS AFRAID OF REPEATING MYSELF.
YEAH, RIGHT. HE JUST HAS SO MANY UNSOLD "1996'S" THAT HE CAN'T AFFORD TO RENDER THEM OBSOLETE YET.
I HEARD THAT!
SPLAT!

SO MY "CONSCIENCE" ALSO SPEAKS THE TRUTH. ...OH, WELL... AT LEAST THE SITUATION FORCED ME TO INNOVATE.
POIT!

HEY, I'VE GOT AN IDEA! SINCE THINGS ARE A LITTLE DISORGANIZED AROUND HERE, WHY DON'T WE GO DOWN TO THE LOCAL MUSEUM TODAY. FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER THEY'RE HAVING AN EXHIBIT OF COMIC BOOKS AND STUFF.

JUST LET ME GET CHANGED AND WE'LL GO.

YOU KNOW, I ACTUALLY HAD A HAND IN THE EXHIBIT, AS THE CURATOR FOUND OUT THAT I REVIEWED COMICS AND HIRED ME TO DESIGN THE SHOW.

THOUGH HE DID CALL ME LAST NIGHT-- OOPS!

...TO COMPLAIN THAT SOME OF THE LOCAL CITIZENS WERE UP IN ARMS OVER THE RISQUE CONTENT OF THE SHOW.
CAN YOU BELIEVE IT!?

IT'S JUST AMAZING HOW NARROW-MINDED SOME PEOPLE ARE.

MR. STAROS! MR. STAROS! HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO THE ALLEGATIONS OF PORNOGRAPHY!?
FASH!
WHAT!?
FASH!
FASH!
HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT YOUR EXHIBIT OF COMIC BOOKS WOULD CONTAIN SUCH ADULT-ORIENTED MATERIAL!?
WAIT A MINUTE! WAIT A MINUTE !!!
COMMIE BASTARD!
WE DON'T WANT YOUR KIND HERE!
COMICS ARE FOR KIDS!
HAVE ANY OF YOU HEARD OF THE FIRST AMENDMENT OR FREEDOM OF SPEECH?
DO ANY OF YOU HAVE ANY APPRECIATION FOR LITERARY, ARTISTIC EXPRESSION?
DID ANY OF YOU TAKE THE TIME TO GO INTO THE READING ROOM AND ACTUALLY READ ONE OF THE BOOKS ON DISPLAY?
YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO KNOW THAT EACH OF THE PIECES WAS SELECTED FOR HAVING SOME SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL, POLITICAL OR MORAL COMMENTARY ON OUR WAY OF LIFE. THEY ALL HAVE A PURPOSE.

EVEN THOUGH COMICS ARE A FORM OF "ENTERTAINMENT," I THINK YOUR ANTIQUATED PRE-CONCEPTIONS OF WHAT THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE IS MAKING YOU NARROW-MINDED IN YOUR OPINION OF THEM.
YES, IT'S A POWERFUL MEDIUM! AND JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT USED TO "SEEING" CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES, DOESN'T MEAN THAT IT'S INAPPROPRIATE OR OBSCENE. IT'S JUST THAT YOU AREN'T USED TO IT!
KIDS
THINK THESE THINGS OVER BEFORE YOU PASS JUDGEMENT.
STOP PORN
KILL STAROS
Tv
HE'S A WITCH!
BURN HIM!
BURN HIM AT THE STAKE!

STOP! STOP! LET US SEEK THE TRUTH IN THIS MATTER FURTHER.
BUT, MR. STAROS-- ADMIT IT-- DON'T YOU THINK THAT SOME OF THE COMICS COMING OUT THESE DAYS ARE PRETTY AWFUL?
OF COURSE, WE ALL FIND DIFFERENT THINGS DISTASTEFUL. BUT THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT ADULTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO READ AND WRITE WHATEVER THEY WANT TO.
DON'T BUY THE BOOK IF IT'S AWFUL. EXERCISE YOUR PERSONAL FREEDOM TO CHOOSE WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU. BUT NO ONE HAS THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE WHAT'S RIGHT FOR EVERYONE ELSE!
AND YOU FEEL THAT CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO THIS ADULT-ORIENTED MATERIAL AS WELL?
NO, I DON'T.
PARENTS DO HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPECT THAT THEIR KIDS WON'T HAVE ACCESS TO CERTAIN KINDS OF ADULT-ORIENTED MATERIAL.
BUT THAT'S AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT SCENARIO THAN ONE IN WHICH ADULTS ARE PERSECUTED SIMPLY FOR OWNING, PUBLISHING OR DISPLAYING MATERIALS INTENDED FOR AN ADULT AUDIENCE.

BUT YOUR EXHIBIT--
LOOK!. EVEN THOUGH THE EXHIBIT SHOWCASES MANY COMICS THAT ARE INTENDED FOR AN ADULT AUDIENCE, IT WAS DESIGNED FOR ALL AGES. YOU KNOW, LIKE A MOVIE PREVIEW.
MR. STAROS--
I'M SORRY! I'VE GOT TO GO NOW. I PROMISED SOME FRIENDS-THRU-COMICS THAT I WOULD SHOW THEM AROUND THE EXHIBIT TODAY.
IF YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION, OR--BETTER YET--IF YOU WANT TO HELP DEFEND THE RIGHT OF FREE SPEECH IN THIS COUNTRY, CONTACT THE COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND. OR SEND THEM A TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION TODAY. THANK YOU.

What if (insert your Favorite book or character name) *comics were forbidden?*

Outrageous? Sure it is, but the works of many comic book professionals have been seized and sometimes banned by the real life thought police.

The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund was founded to fight these threats. In the last five years, the CBLDF has spent over $200,000 defending First Amendment rights in the comic book industry. We have successfully defended or deterred over a dozen threats to comic book artists, publishers, and retailers from over-zealous police departments, prosecutors, and would-be censors.

Please help us continue our mission to fight censorship by making a donation. With your support, the CBLDF can continue to champion comic book professionals' freedom of speech. After all, it's the thought police that should be banned!

(clip and mail)

_____ Yes! I want to help fight censorship in the comic book industry. Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of:

_____ $15 _____ $50
_____ $25 _____ other

Please add my name to your mailing list and send me more information:

Name: _____

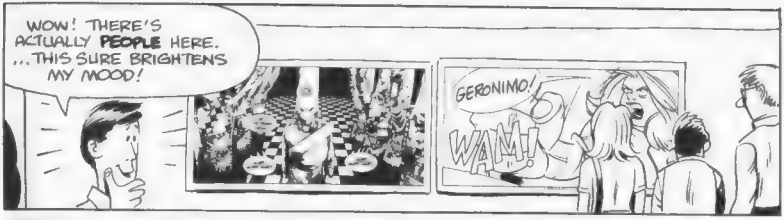
Address: _____

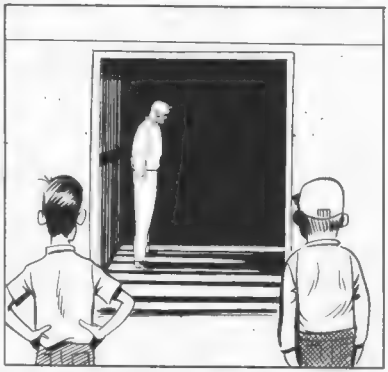
City/State: _____ Zip: _____

THE COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

Mail donations and inquiries to:
CBLDF • P.O. Box 693
Northampton, MA 01061
1-800-992-2533
e-mail: 102437.1430@compuserve.com

DAMN JOURNALISTS. WHY COULDN'T I HAVE CHOSEN AN ARTISTIC MEDIUM WITH LOW CIRCULATION AND PROFESSIONAL ANONYMITY.
I SWEAR, IF COMICS GET ANY MORE POPULAR I'M GONNA HAVE TO MOVE!
THIS WEEK ONLY! COMICS EXHIBIT MUST BE OVER 18
JESUS CHRIST! WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, FRED!?
POOF!
SORRY, CHRIS. ORDERS FROM THE HEAD HONCHO HISSELF.
IS HE HERE!?
NO, MR. HIGGINS TOOK THE DAY OFF AND UH TOLD ME THAT IF I SAW YOU, TO TELL YOU... HOW'D HE SAY?-- "TO JUST DEAL WITH IT!"--YEP, THAT'S WHAT HE SAID.
I GET THE MESSAGE, FRED.... I'LL BE INSIDE IF YOU NEED ME.
I RECKON SO.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!... THERE'S NOTHING HERE A KID COULDN'T SEE.... IT'S ALL TASTEFULLY DISPLAYED AS ART.... BUT, THEN AGAIN, I DID SAY... DAMN, I SURE WISH I HAD ALL THE ANSWERS.





WELCOME TO ... THE 1997 GUIDE TO THE BEST COMICS IN THE INDUSTRY

What You Should Be Reading Now!

It's hard to believe that so many intelligent and innovative comics have come out since last year, but then again, that's just a reflection of the times we're living in. — Hey, the industry may be broke, but the talent has never been brighter or more abundant! — That's why this year's "list" is entirely comprised of *new* reviews; noteworthy comics and graphic novels released since the last issue, as well as a few more established titles that I previously missed. ... See, your letters *do* make a difference — thanks!

And not to let controversy pass me by, I've gone ahead and rank-ordered all of the titles again. I know, I know ... I've received a lot of mail asking "Why do you do this!?" Well ... the truth is, I did it to force people to articulate the reasons *why* they felt one book was better than another. Simply reviewing them wouldn't cause this to happen. ... So feel free to blame me for your stimulating conversations if you want to.

I should also add that it was never my intention for *The Staros Report* to become the "definitive" anything, nor my desire for anyone to agree with my picks or rankings. I just want to start a discussion on the best comics in the industry and hopefully point you in the direction of a few new titles.

Have fun with it, and (once again) I apologize in advance to the many talented creators I have inadvertently left off the list. With your continued advice, I'm sure that *The Staros Report* can only get better.

The following symbols are used to help you track down the titles:

S-x	=	ongoing series (x issues to date)
LS-x	=	ongoing limited-series (x issues to date)
x-MS	=	x-issue mini-series
x-DS	=	x-issue discontinued series
†	=	trade paperback(s) available
OS	=	one-shot comic book
GN	=	graphic novel
CGN	=	compilation graphic novel
x-GN	=	x-issue GN (or CGN) series
TPB	=	trade paperback
(W)	=	writer
(I)	=	illustrator
[ ]	=	first publication date of title
OP:	=	originally published (in or by)
{ }	=	US ordering information in US$ (foreign orders include extra S&H)
ppd	=	postpaid
S&H	=	shipping & handling
Sub:x:$y	=	x-issue subscription for $y (ppd)

P.S. — Immediately following is an all-up list from the combined *1996 & 1997 Reports*; with an index this time, to boot! ... Now don't cheat and turn to it first! Enjoy ...

• "Museum Exhibit" Inserts (from left to right) *Strangehaven* © Gary Spencer Millidge • *Ragmop* © Rob Walton • *Bacchus* © Eddie Campbell •

THE BEST MAGAZINES & FANZINES
(just one new one this year!)

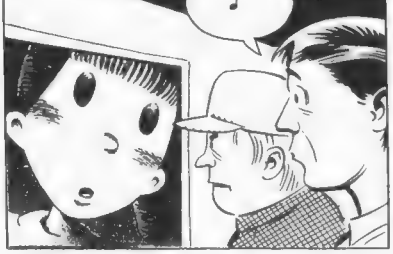
MAGAZINE-1) Feature (industry magazine / edited by Charles Brownstein / Feature Press / Vol-3.S-1 [1997] / Vol-2:5-DS [10/95] / Vol-1:5-DS [8/94]). In a time when very few industry magazines are surviving, it gives me great pleasure to endorse another quality source for comics information. Put together by aficionado Charles Brownstein, this prolific publication is packed full of interesting interviews — with "no-names" like Will Eisner, Neil Gaiman, Eddie Campbell, and Steve Bissette no less! — as well as reviews of comics worthy of your attention. I have no idea how Charles can come out with these things so often, *nor* how he manages to travel in such distinguished circles; but I'm not the jealous type, so I won't hold it against him. It's a professional and enthusiastic publication that I can only wish the best for. {Vol-1 #1-#5 (pack). $10 ppd / Vol-2 #1-#5: $1.75 ea. + $2 S&H / Vol-3 #1: $4 ppd / Feature Press • PO Box 280507 • Northridge, CA 91328-0507}

THE BEST COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS

77) Akiko On The Planet Smoo (OS & S-13 / Mark Crilley / Sirius [OS-12/95, #1:3/96]). In an industry that has all but forgotten the "young reader," it sure is refreshing to see a cartoonist "go out on a limb" and "dare" to produce an all-ages comic book. Now, the book isn't perfect, but as a delightfully illustrated adventure about a young girl and all her odd little space buddies, it definitely has an appeal that seems ripe for animation. ... The only *problem* with *Akiko* is that it lacks in the subtext department. ... ... I've always found the "all-ages" stories that have worked the best (and achieved the widest appeal) were the ones that were plotted for kids, but subtly written for adults. — Does any kid ever get the title-swapping metaphors in *Bullwinkle* or the psychoanalysis in *A Charlie Brown Christmas*? No, but it sure does keep entire families glued to their TV sets year after year. — If Crilley just took the next step, and brought a little more insight to his book, he could probably help himself (*and* the whole comics industry) build a much larger and longer-lasting audience. Let's hope he does. {OS:$3.95 & #1-up:$2.50 ea. + $4 S&H / Sirius • PO Box 128 • Stanhope, NJ 07874} "Museum Exhibit" Inserts © Mark Crilley

76) Street Smell (S-3 / Bruce Mutard / Bad Art Studios [3/94]). I had to apologize to Bruce for not having enough room to run his review in last year's *Staros Report*. But on the premise of "better late than never," let me tell you a thing or two about this professional "underground" from down under. ... *Street Smell* is a compilation of stories in which Bruce demonstrates a command of a wide range of important subjects. And within his stories about supermodels, beauty pageants, and the self-absorbed fantasy world of men, Bruce really penetrates the issues of exploitation, sexual repression, and self-esteem (no pun intended — or was there?). ... It may be a tad crude at times for some readers, but this hard-hitting book definitely has something to say. {Issues #0, #1, & #2 / $5 ea. ppd / Bruce Mutard / PO Box 2231 / North Brighton, Vic. 3186 / Australia} Illo © Bruce Mutard

75) Castle Waiting (S-1 / Linda Medley / Olio [1996]). Linda's fresh take on the classic fairy tales kicks off with *The Curse of Brambly Hedge* (a.k.a. "Sleeping Beauty"). This clean and appealing rendition is perfect for all ages, and gives the reader not only a refresher on the tale, but also a chance to spend a little more time with the supporting characters. ... Although this is Linda's first written and self-published work, her extensive experience as a comics illustrator really shows through. A professional package indeed. {64-pages / perfect bound / $5.95 + $1 S&H / Olio • PO Box 1012 • Petaluma, CA 94953-1012} Illo © Linda Medley



74) Batman: Black & White (4-MS / various (W&I) / DC Comics [6/96]). Finally, DC let the "alternative" guys take a whack at the greatest superhero of all time. This compilation of short stories — which also featured a Neil Gaiman story in issue #2 — put the best "black & white" writers and artists behind DC's biggest star. ... And what else would you expect? It worked! ... Hey, DC! How 'bout showcasing a few more alternative writers and artists every now and then in *Batman* or *Detective Comics*? Nothing against Chuck Dixon, but wouldn't it be nice to see that old "Moore" and "Miller" magic in the big titles again? {local retailer} Illo by Bill Sienkiewicz and © DC Comics

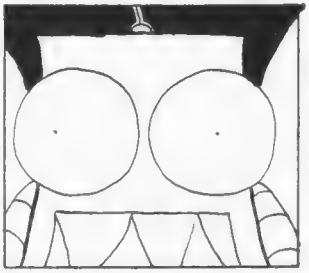
73) Budda On The Road (S-3 / Colin Upton / AEON [8/96]). Norman just signed a contract to kill God. He didn't take it seriously (as he was just trying to stop a lunatic from killing himself), but now he's found himself smack in the middle of Armageddon. ... The book's explicit sexual situations and sacrilegious motif may not be for everyone, but the series works because it uses contradictions to expose all the absurdities in organized Christianity. And since I practically minored in Witchcraft at the University of California, Irvine — no lie, I took three semesters of it; all "A"s too! — I've always had an affinity for irreverent religious works. I'm looking forward to Colin's further insightful commentary on mankind's love/hate relationship with religion. *For Mature Readers.* {$2.95 ea. + $3 S&H / AEON • 5014-D Roosevelt Way NE • Seattle, WA 98105 / (206) 525-0632} Illo © Colin Upton

72) Tongue Lash (2-MS / Randy and Jean-Marc Lofficier (W) & Dave Taylor (I) / Dark Horse [8/96]). Even though this mini-series appears to be an homage piece to the sci-fi art of Moebius and the erotic art of Milo Manara, I found it intriguing enough (i.e., titillating *and* suspenseful) to actually want to read it on a monthly basis. So, Dark Horse, can I have another lashing, please? .. Tongue (the girl) and Lash (the guy) are two erotically-charged criminal investigators who solve a murder set in an other-worldly future filled with high-tech gadgetry and anachronistic symbolism. {$2.95 ea. + $4 S&H / Dark Horse • 10956 SE Main St. • Milwaukie, OR 97222 / 1-800-862-0052}

71) Silent City (GN / Erez Yakin / Kitchen Sink Press [10/95]). The inspiration of a despairing and defiant martyr motivates another to start a revolution against a fascist regime. Thought provoking and horrifying, this silent nightmare cautions us not to forget history's lessons or the warning signs just ahead. {$24.95 + $6.50 / Kitchen Sink Press • 320 Riverside Drive • Northampton, MA 01060 / 1-800-365-7465} "Museum Exhibit" Inserts © Erez Yakin

70) Oink: Heaven's Butcher (3-MS / John Mueller / Kitchen Sink Press [12/95]). Oink, a genetically engineered "pigman," escapes his enslavement at a slaughter house to enter "Heaven"; the not-so-pleasant city that spawned him. A beautifully rendered, albeit horrifying, series that makes several strong statements about animal rights, vegetarianism, the dangers of a religious state, and the fact that history often repeats itself. {$2.95 ea. + $4.50 / Kitchen Sink Press • 320 Riverside Drive • Northampton, MA 01060 / 1-800-365-7465}

69) Nozone (S-? / anthology / edited by Knickerbocker / No Zone [1990]). This environmentally conscious anthology contains a nice blend of avant-garde, underground, and alternative stories. It's a little hard to find at times, and quite erratic in its publication, but it's also one of the few literary comics that can be found in better bookstores. . . Your local Barnes & Noble may have a copy on the magazine racks right now. ... Contributions from Peter Kuper, David Mazzucchelli, Richard Sala, Tom Tomorrow, Gary Panter, and many others. {#1:$2, #4:$5, #5:$7, #6:$9, & #7:$7 ppd / Nozone • PO Box 1124 • Knickerbocker Station • New York, NY 10002}



68) Captain Zap (S-2 / Oliver Simonsen / What? Comics [1996]). I met Oliver at last year's Alternative Press Expo as he was cheerfully handing out xeroxes of his soon-to-be-self-published *Captain Zap*. .. And though there's a tendency to move quickly through the stack of "xeroxed" stuff one acquires at a convention, it didn't take me long to realize that I needed to pay special attention to this book. — Don't we all feel trapped in a routine programmed for us by jobs, authority figures, and financial commitments? And don't we all find the compromises we make for our contentment repulsive at times? *Captain Zap* made me ponder this and more in a cute and compelling manner. ... If the series keeps its inward gaze and continues to develop artistically, this story about a "disenchanted robot" has the potential of becoming quite popular. Check it out. {$2.25 ea. ppd / What? Comics • 8424-A Santa Monica Blvd., #106 • Los Angeles, CA 90069} Illo © Oliver Simonsen

67) King-Cat Comics & Stories (S-51 / John Porcellino / Spit And A Half [5/89]). John Porcellino is an icon of the small-press. His digest-size mini-comic is by far the longest running publication of its kind, and his company, Spit And A Half, offers the premiere catalog in the small-press scene. ... Now, I can't say that I'm *always* impressed by his autobiographical ruminations in *King-Cat* — as they sometimes get bogged down in unnecessary trivialities — but when they *do* work, those same "trivialities" take a stand for mankind and the environment that can only be admired. ... Check out *King-Cat* and also send John a couple of stamps for one of his catalogs; where you'll find works by David Lasky, Joe Chiappetta, Tom Hart, Jeff Zenick, Jenny Zervakis, Jessica Abel, Jeff LeVine, James Kochalka, Rebecca Dart, and Mark Cunningham (to mention but a few). . . *The* gateway to the small-press awaits you. {Sub:4:$5 ppd & Catalog / Spit And A Half • PO Box 18510 • Denver, CO 80218} "Museum Exhibit" Inserts © John Porcellino

66) Artbabe (Vol-2:S-1 / Jessica Abel / Fantagraphics [1997] // Vol-1:5-DS / self-published [1993]). Although the first few issues of *Artbabe* didn't do that much for me, Jessica's fifth issue definitely proved itself worthy of a wider audience. Her stories are not necessarily autobiographical, but they resonate with a gentle (and often melancholy) tone that can only come from one's soul. ... One story in particular, "Jack London," struck me as quite inventive, as it's introspective musings cleverly compare one's cloudy state of mind at work with the dreamlike condition one often feels on a wintry day. A nice mood piece indeed. {#4:$2 & #5:$3 ppd / Jessica Abel • PO Box 642773 • Chicago, IL 60664-2773 // Vol-2 issue(s) available from Fantagraphics} Illo © Jessica Abel

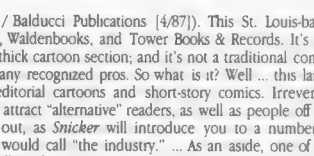
YOU'D L-LIKE TO TALK COMICS WITH ME?
YOUR BADGE WOULD INDICATE THAT YOU'D KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT THIS EXHIBIT, NOW WOULDN'T IT?
OH YEAH, SORRY. ...IT'S MY FAVORITE SUBJECT, YOU KNOW. BUT IT OFTEN SEEMS THAT NO ONE HAS ANY INTEREST IN IT.
WELL, ALL OF THE RECENT MEDIA ATTENTION OVER THE EXHIBIT HAS REKINDLED MY CURIOSITY.... I'M ROGER DAVIS, BY THE WAY.

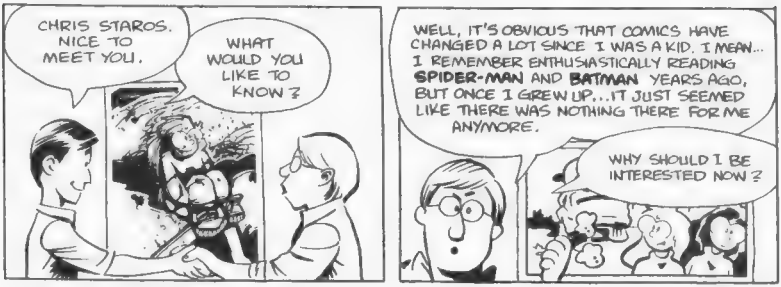
65) Emma Davenport (S-9 / Gina Prosch (W) & Richie Prosch (I) / Lohman Hills Press [4/95]), and The Windburnt Plains of Wonder (GN / Gina Prosch (W) & Richie Prosch (I) / Lohman Hills Press [1996]). One of the *few* things that I used to religiously read in *Comics Buyer's Guide* was the *Emma Davenport* strip. It was always so lighthearted and endearing that I couldn't help but fall in love with it. ... So, when I finally found out that Gina and Richie were self-publishing *Emma* (around issue six or seven, I might add — where was I!?), I just had to pick it up. ... Although they struggled to find a direction for *Emma* early on, recent issues have really hit a nice stride, combining cute characters in single-issue stories for kids, with reassuring messages about life for adults. ... And their latest project, *The Windburnt Plains of Wonder*, takes *Emma* to an even higher plane. It's poetic and dreamy, perfectly capturing the mood and sentiment of a child's lazy summer days. ... With the captivating way that Richie and Gina portray Emma, there's no doubt that she has the potential to become a very popular, mass-marketed commodity. ... A hand-colored "children's" book wouldn't be a bad idea either. {$2.75 ea. + $2 S&H / *Windburnt*: $11.95 + $2 S&H / Lohman Hills Press • Box 737 • Laurens, SC 29360} "Museum Exhibit" Inserts © Richie & Gina Prosch

64) Chiaroscuro: The Private Lives of Leonardo da Vinci (10-MS / Pat McGreal (W), David Rawson (W), Chas Truog (I), & Rafael Kayanan (I) / Vertigo/DC [7/95]). Told from the point of view of Salia (a boy Leonardo da Vinci took in as a child), this mini-series tells the tale of one of Europe's most famous historical figures. And though I wouldn't exactly call the series flattering — as both Salia and Leonardo come off as preening dilettantes on an eternal quest for a better benefactor — it does give an interesting perspective on the man and show him to be quite human. ... The series was highly entertaining, but if it had a flaw, it was that it lacked a certain reverence for his work; perhaps missing the right balance between the story's sexual overtones (which were rather predominant) and the historical information that was presented. ... Definitely not in the league of Moore and Campbell's *From Hell* (which, now that it's complete, can easily be touted as the best graphic novel of all time), but it's the kind of well researched book I'd like to see a lot more of. Good job, guys! {local retailer}

63) Snicker (*S-many* / edited by Rich Balducci / Balducci Publications [4/87]). This St. Louis-based publication has recently become available at B. Dalton, Waldenbooks, and Tower Books & Records. It's not exactly a newspaper, though it's formatted just like a thick cartoon section; and it's not a traditional comics anthology either, yet it contains contributions from many recognized pros. So what is it? Well ... this large, newspaper-style "anthology" showcases wall-to-wall editorial cartoons and short-story comics. Irreverent and professional, it contains all the spirit necessary to attract "alternative" readers, as well as people off the streets who don't normally read comics. ... Check it out, as *Snicker* will introduce you to a number of cartoonists who don't usually contribute to what we would call "the industry." ... As an aside, one of the things I like best about *Snicker*, is that its large format allows for comics art to be reproduced at 100%. How often do you see that!? {$3:sample issue / Sub:3:$5 / Sub:11:$10 / $20: all back issues in stock plus a T-shirt / all ppd / Balducci Publications • 1248 Oak Bark Dr. • St. Louis, MO 63146 • Phn/Fax: (314) 993-1633}

62) Negative Burn (S-46 / anthology / edited by Joe Pruett / Caliber [1993]). Although this anthology still has some thematic problems, Joe Pruett deserves some major kudos for attracting the "caliber" of talent that the does, and for producing a book — and a rather thick one at that — on such a infallible, monthly schedule. ... A nice showcase of emerging and established comics talent. {Various back issues available directly from Joe Pruett • PO Box 893 • Acworth, GA 30101} Illo © Paul Pope




CHRIS STAROS. NICE TO MEET YOU.
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW?
WELL, IT'S OBVIOUS THAT COMICS HAVE CHANGED A LOT SINCE I WAS A KID. I MEAN... I REMEMBER ENTHUSIASTICALLY READING SPIDER-MAN AND BATMAN YEARS AGO, BUT ONCE I GREW UP...IT JUST SEEMED LIKE THERE WAS NOTHING THERE FOR ME ANYMORE.
WHY SHOULD I BE INTERESTED NOW?

61) Minimum Wage (Vol-2:S-6 / Vol-1:GN / Bob Fingerman / Fantagraphics [1995]). A casual and semi-autobiographical tale of life in the alternative "twentysomethings." Told with a sense of humor and a real understanding of what motivates people in their early twenties (e.g., apartments, sex, no babies, sex, and like, notoriety baby), Fingerman has managed to produce quite a nice book. ... I particularly liked issue #4's expose on the nerdyness of comic conventions. ... Yes, we truly are ready for our own "*Spinal Tap*." {Vol-1 GN: $9.95 & Vol-2 #1-#4: $2.95 ea. + $4 S&H / Fantagraphics • 7563 Lake City Way NE • Seattle, WA 98115 / 1-800-657-1100} Illo © Bob Fingerman

60) "The Works of Tom Tomorrow" including: Greetings From This Modern World (CGN / St. Martin's Griffin [1992]), Tune In Tomorrow (CGN / St Martin's [1994]), The Wrath of Sparky (CGN / St. Martin's [8/96]), and his many anthology contributions. If you've ever seen any of Mr. Tomorrow's single-page parodies of politics (and life), you'd understand why I got excited when I discovered these compilations. The best humor is always true, and Tom has laid bare "this modern world" with a scathing, satirical, and maybe even a-little-too-honest eye. ... Especially the one I saw in an anthology — I can't remember where! — about his "magic pee-pee phrase", you know, the phrase he recites to himself to be able to pee in public men's rooms. ... Geez, and I thought *I* was the only one who had one (though I'm *never* telling what mine is). {$9.95 ea. + $3 S&H / St. Martin's Griffin • 175 Fifth Ave. • New York, NY 10010}

59) "The *Mini-Comics* of Matt Feazell" (various mini-comics / Matt Feazell / Not Available Comics). They don't call Matt Feazell "The King of Mini-Comics" for nothing! From his funny stories, expressive characters, and great layouts, to his highly-professional packaging and "corporate image," he's probably got the neatest self-publishing "empire" around. Titles like *Not Available Comics* (Feazell's flagship "anthology"), *The Death of Antisocialman*, *The Board of Superheroes*, and *Cute Girl* may give you an indication of his sense of humor, but until you actually *read* them, you won't be able to truly appreciate his ingenious irreverence for life ... Send him a couple bucks to sample his minis — they're *only* fifty cents a piece! — or try the compilation graphic novel, *Ert!*, which reprints a bunch of his "shorter" stories. ... The tip of the mini-comic iceberg awaits you. ... ... I should also take a moment to compliment Walt Lockley (Feazell's writer/collaborator on *The Death of Antisocialman*). His stories are a riot and his writing style works seamlessly with the minimalism that is Feazell. Good job, Walt! {Catalog of minis @ Not Available Comics • 3867 Bristow • Detroit, MI 48212 // *Ert!*: $12.95 + $3 S&H / Caliber Back Issues • 225 North Sheldon Rd. • Plymouth, MI 48170 • (888) 22-COMIC} "Museum Exhibit" Inserts © Matt Feazell

58) Swan (S-4 / Mike Moreu / Little Idylls [4/95]). At first glance, you might brush this series off as a lame "Sword and Sorcery" parody. As you start to delve into it, however, you realize that a rather crafty mind is behind the whole thing. The characters are outrageous and the plot is ... well, outlandish; but somehow, this intricate and suspenseful adventure makes you feel like it's all quite real. ... The icing on the cake is definitely Mike's wild sense of humor; a challenging mix of philosophical insight and "out of time" trend-bashing for sure. ... I eagerly await further insights into Swan (himself), the Paxis, and Queen Alcestis. {$2.95 ea. + $2 S&H / Little Idylls • PO Box 20553 • Seattle, WA 98102} Illo © Mike Moreu

GOOD QUESTION.
LET'S WALK AROUND THE EXHIBIT AND I'LL EXPLAIN.
AROUND 1983, A SORT OF COMICS RENAISSANCE BEGAN. CREATORS YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER HEARD OF BEFORE--LIKE ALAN MOORE, GILBERT & JAIME HERNANDEZ, AND ART SPIEGELMAN--BROUGHT A KIND OF LITERARY SENSIBILITY TO THE MEDIUM. THEY BROKE THE POTENTIAL OF COMICS WIDE OPEN.
WHAT DID THEY DO SO DIFFERENTLY?

57) Crush (4-MS / Burpo / AEON/MU Press [11/95]). Our most tortured inner thoughts rise awfully close to the surface in this highly stylized and engaging enigma. ... Set in a dystopian (yet organized) future, we see the world through the eyes of a window teller, who's outward perversions are only matched by his inward desire for a normal life. ... My only wish was that the series had continued; partly because I needed a few explanations — geez, look at me searching for easy answers! — but also because it was quite poetic and brilliantly rendered. ... Keep your eyes peeled for Burpo's next release from AEON, entitled *(italics mine)*. His star is definitely on the rise. {$2.95 ea. + $3 S&H / AEON • 5014-D Roosevelt Way NE • Seattle, WA 98105 / (206) 525-0632} "Museum Exhibit" Inserts (in left panel) © Burpo

56) Box Office Poison (S-4 / Alex Robinson / Antarctic Press [10/96]). I really wish Antarctic Press would publish more books like *Box Office Poison*. — They've done it before, but they just don't do it enough! — Ever heard of *Strangers In Paradise* or *Schizo*? ... Well, they both got their start at Antarctic, and became popular because their emphasis was on character development and human relationships. If Antarctic would cut back on all those cheap anthropomorphic/manga sex adventures, and add a few more human-interest titles, I think their long-term reputation would be greatly enhanced. ... ... *Box Office Poison* is a lighthearted, "twentysomething" story about the relationships, dreams, and careers of a few friends. And as it playfully examines the nuances of human mating rituals, it also provides a clever commentary on the comics industry itself. A *really* pleasant read, for sure. ... Hey, Antarctic! Don't let this one go, okay? Nurture it and promote it, as the promising Alex Robinson is definitely worth the investment. {$2.95 ea. + $3 S&H / Antarctic Press • 7272 Wurzbach, Suite #204 • San Antonio, TX 78240 / Fax: (210) 614-5029} Illo © Alex Robinson

55) Kingdom of the Wicked (S-3 / Ian Edginton (W) & D'Israeli (I) / Caliber [1996]). The title is a slight misnomer, in that it's *not* your typical, dark-edged Caliber book. It's about a writer who's haunted by the dream world he created as a child. ... He grew up and neglected it, and now it's begun to decay. .. Beautifully illustrated and full of potential, this is a nice "sign up" for a publisher that continues to improve by leaps and bounds. Bravo! {$2.95 ea. + $3 S&H / Caliber Back Issues • 225 North Sheldon Rd. • Plymouth, MI 48170 • (888) 22-COMIC} "Museum Exhibit" Insert (in right panel) © D'Israeli & Ian Edginton

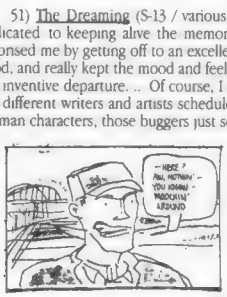
54) Girl Hero (S-6 / mag-size / Megan Kelso / High Drive Publications [1993]). Though *Girl Hero*'s main, sci-fi-oriented story line, "Bottlecap," doesn't do that much for me, I've been wanting to publicly praise Megan's insightful back-up stories for quite some time. These examinations of relationships — as well as some fairly sensitive subjects — are just plain masterpieces, and really show her true calling in comics . But just like Los Bros. did when they started out, I can see that Megan's just flying her "rocket" around a bit before she comes back to earth. ... And with one foot firmly planted on the ground (already), I expect to see some quite amazing stuff from her in the near future. {#2-#6 $3 ea. ppd / High Drive Publications • 4505 University Way NE #536 • Seattle, WA 98105} Illo © Megan Kelso

WELL, SOME OF THEM DISTANCED THEMSELVES FROM THE STATUS QUO BY CREATING MEANINGFUL HUMAN-INTEREST COMICS, AND OTHERS WORKED WITHIN THE STEREOTYPES TO PORTRAY THE MEDIUM'S TRADITIONAL THEMES IN A MORE REALISTIC LIGHT.
SO COMICS AREN'T FOR KIDS ANYMORE ?
THERE'S STILL A LOT OF COMICS FOR KIDS, BUT THE MEDIUM'S NOT EXCLUSIVELY THEIRS ANYMORE.

53) "Comics To Bore & Confuse You (featuring Fenwick & Maw)" (S-4 / Jesse Hamm / Jesse Hamm [4/95] / appearing in *Scattered* #24, #25, #26, & #28). It wouldn't surprise me if you've never heard of *Comics To Bore & Confuse You*, because the ongoing continuity has been unfortunately hidden in a (not-too-well-distributed) self-published book called *Scattered*. But if you were lucky enough to run across an issue, and had the perseverance to get to the back half of it, you would have run across a little pearl that wouldn't have "bored or confused" you in the least. ... In the continuity, Jesse uses his two hilarious (and "hornific") hosts, Fenwick and Maw, to take a self-deprecating view of the entire comics community, as well as to introduce another (and much more serious) fictional story line. .. There's a lot of emotional dexterity in Jesse's written word and artwork, as I would find the humor of Fenwick & Maw just as affecting as the more contemplative parts of his other continuity ... And just the fact that *Negative Burn* has recently reprinted some of these stories (starting with issue #41) indicates that I'm not the only one who thinks that Jesse's star is on the rise. ... Somebody give this guy his own book, eh!? {The "Bore & Confuse You" issues of *Scattered* (#24, #25, #26, & #28) $2.50 ea. ppd (or all 4 for $8.00 ppd) / Jesse Hamm • 2401 W. Turner Road • Lodi, CA 95242} Illo & "Museum Exhibit" Inserts (in left panel) © Jesse Hamm

52) Kingdom Come (4-MS† / Mark Waid (W) & Alex Ross (I) / DC Comics [1996]). Knowing a good thing when they saw it, DC didn't waste any time in recreating "Marvels" in their own image. But contrary to my usual reaction to copycat ventures, I actually liked this book. First of all, who could resist the chance of seeing Alex Ross work his magic on the DC universe; it's just too awe-inspiring to resist. And secondly, even though I hadn't read any of his (much touted) mainstream work before, I thought that Mark Waid did a surprisingly good job with the story. It satisfies the Golden-Age fan from a nostalgia point of view, and provides a neat commentary on how the state of violence in our society is reflected in today's mainstream comic-book superheroes (even if censors would have you believe the opposite). . . . But, in truth, the thing that made me like the book the most, was that it raised a rather large (and scary) question: "Can a democracy keep itself from succumbing to fascism when faced with a society too violent for it to control anymore?" I couldn't help but ponder America's own political future after reading *Kingdom Come*. {local retailer}

51) The Dreaming (S-13 / various (W&I) / edited by Alisa Kwitney / Vertigo/DC Comics [6/96]) The series that's dedicated to keeping alive the memory — and profits! — of (at least the lesser known characters of) *The Sandman*, surprised me by getting off to an excellent start. Terry LaBan and Peter Snejbjerg's arc, entitled *The Goldie Factor*, was quite good, and really kept the mood and feel of the original series. And Bryan Talbot's arc, entitled *Weird Romance*, was quite the inventive departure. .. Of course, I can't imagine that the quality of *The Dreaming* will stay consistent — what with all the different writers and artists scheduled to participate. But I guess it's hard to miss with even second and third-tier Neil Gaiman characters, those buggers just seem to have a life of their own. {local retailer}



50) Storeyville (OS / newspaper-size / Sirk / Sirk Productions [1995]). Pushing the envelope of style with its unique, large newspaper format and light autumn color scheme, this "graphic novel" tracks the life of Will, a yesteryear hobo in pursuit of his gentlemanly mentor, Reverend Rudy. The story takes him from Philadelphia to Montreal, where in the pursuit of his friend, he actually discovers himself . A unique experience for sure. ... Read it twice for full impact. {$3 ppd / Sirk Productions • PO Box 642896 • San Francisco, CA 94164} Illo & "Museum Exhibit" Insert (in right panel) © Sirk

I SEE. SO THIS EXHIBIT REPRESENTS ALL OF THE HIGH-BROW STUFF, THEN.
I WOULDN'T NECESSARILY CALL IT HIGH-BROW, BUT YEAH, I SELECTED THESE COMICS TO REPRESENT THE MOST INTELLIGENT AND INNOVATIVE COMICS BEING DONE TODAY.
SO WHAT'S YOUR CRITERIA FOR GETTING INTO THE EXHIBIT? WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A COMIC BOOK?

49) Armed & Dangerous (4-MS / Bob Hall / Armada/Acclaim Comics [4/96]), Armed & Dangerous: Special #1 (OS / [8/96]), and Armed & Dangerous: Hell's Slaughterhouse (4-MS / [10/96]). An excellent black & white crime-noir drama, reminiscent of *Sin City* and *Stray Bullets*. Eddy Donovan tells the tale of his gruesome indoctrination into the New York underworld by his Uncle Mitch ("the fixer"), who disposes of bodies for the mob. Stark and alluring artwork, and extremely well written. This is the first book by Acclaim that I've recommended. ... Look for Bob's next installment entitled *When Irish Eyes are Dying*. {$2.95 ea. + $4 S&H / Acclaim Comics • 275 Seventh Ave. • New York, NY 10001} Illo © Bob Hall

48) The Job Thing (CGN / Carol Tyler / Fantagraphics [3/93]). This is one of those rare comics that actually makes you laugh out loud. I read it on an airplane and I'm afraid that the nearby passengers lost all respect for me (and for the kind of people who read comics). ... I apologize for all the damage that I have done. ... But, hey, it's not my fault! It's just that Carol Tyler is *that* funny. Her "everyday" stories of shitty jobs, and how you hold one down when motherhood, kids, getting sick, and trying to draw comics gets in the way, just strike an (incredibly funny) universal chord. ... A great compilation of stories for sure! {$7.95 + $4 S&H / Fantagraphics • 7563 Lake City Way NE • Seattle, WA 98115 / 1-800-657-1100} Illo © Carol Tyler

47) Real Americans Admit, "The Worst Thing I've Ever Done!" (CGN / Ted Rall / NBM [1996]) Comprised of a bunch of short stories — many of which were first seen in *ComicsLit Magazine* — these tales are the cathartic confessions of the many people that Ted Rall has dared to ask the question: "What's the worst thing you've ever done?" Illustrated in a cartoony style that appropriately portrays everyone as stylized morons — as we *all* are at our worst — these stories make us laugh, but also make us question our past, and contemplate what we're (unfortunately) capable of given the right set of circumstances. . . Like Ted said in his introduction, "Every day is a struggle to live with the past." Can you live with yours? {$8.95 + $2 S&H / NBM • 185 Madison Ave, Suite 1504 • New York, NY 10016 / 1-800-886-1223} "Museum Exhibit" Inserts © Ted Rall

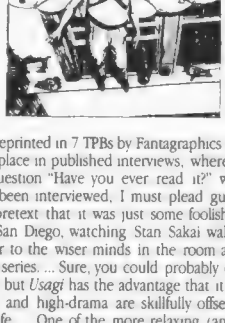
46) "The (written) Works of J.M. DeMatteis" including: Brooklyn Dreams (4-MS / Glenn Barr (I) / Paradox Press/DC [1995]), Seekers (15-DS / various (I) / Vertigo/DC [1/96]), Blood: A Tale (4-MS / Kent Williams (I) / Vertigo/DC [11/96] / OP: DC Comics [1987]), & Moonshadow (12-MS / various (I) / Vertigo/DC [1996] / OP: Epic/Marvel Comics+). Aside from *Brooklyn Dreams*, which is one of my all-time favorite books (and which also received high praise last issue), the rest of J. M. DeMatteis' literary work definitely merits careful reading and some discussion. ... Not that I'm absolutely enthralled with it, mind you. There's actually a love-hate relationship going on here. ... His work is poetic, yet not always coherent; subtle, though sometimes pretentious; and beautifully conceived, but often a tad too artsy for its own good. . . Don't get me wrong, his command of prose and the ability to produce unusual imagery in ones mind is definitely something to be admired. But as often as I'm impressed by his insight into the human dilemma, I'm equally depressed by his not-so-subtle sales pitch on God. I have no problem with pursuing some sort of spiritual end, but when it seems to always converge on the ultimate cop out, his books really starts to fade. . . But I still read everything he publishes! ... What does that say? Am I a "seeker"? I don't think so, but it definitely says that DeMatteis can write. .. Vertigo has recently re-released several of his works, so you ought to track down these controversial gems while they're readily available. {local retailer}

WELL, I'M PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH DEPTH; THE SOCIAL, MORAL, OR POLITICAL UNDERCURRENT THAT GIVES THE STORY RELEVANCE TO MY LIFE.
BUT I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT ALL COMIC BOOKS WOULD BE DEEP!
WELL, NOT ALL COMIC BOOKS GET INTO THE EXHIBIT, EITHER.

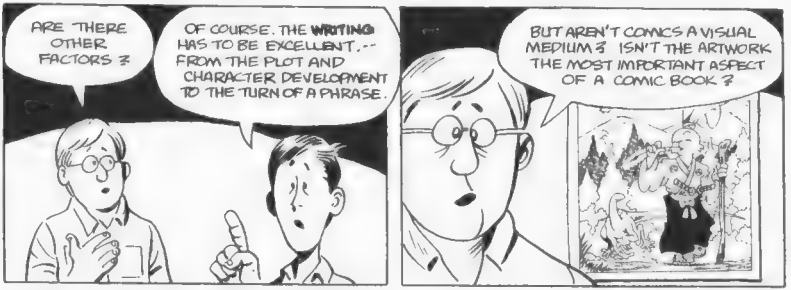
45) Seven Miles A Second (OS / David Wojnarowicz (W) & James Romberger (I) / Vertigo Vérité/DC Comics [1996]). A chilling and honest portrayal of David Wojnarowicz's actual life in New York city. From his days as a street hustler at the age of twelve, to his death of AIDS related causes in 1992, this artist gives his all in this last will and testament. ... Each of us can gain something from the lessons he learned in life. {local retailer}

44) Hummingbird (S-1 / Gregory Benton / Slave Labor Graphics [6/96]). Slave Labor's best find of 1996. ... It's an odd little tale of a young girl called Hummingbird, whose innocent resilience keeps her hovering above her dysfunctional family situation. And even though the book deals with some pretty scary situations, it comes off more like an enjoyable, surreal nightmare — the kind you encourage to come back the next night. ... I'm definitely going to ride this "sleeper" for some time to come. {$4.95 ea. + $2 S&H / Slave Labor Graphics • 979 S. Bascom Ave. • San Jose, CA 95128 • 1-800-866-8929} Illo © Gregory Benton

43) Dear Julia (4-MS / Brian Biggs / Black Eye Productions [6/96]) Of all the "new" publishers on the block, the one I tend to take the most seriously is Black Eye Productions. Publisher Michel Vrána has an eye for editorial, production, and thematic quality that one can only (admirably) compare to Chris Oliveros of Drawn & Quarterly. Thus, when given the chance to sample a new Black Eye book, I *always* do. .. *Dear Julia* is an illustrative and narrative triumph. It tells the tale of an odd little man, who (through his suicide note) explains his current, overwhelming desire to "fly." ... I can't say that I'm familiar with Brian Biggs' earlier work (if any), but I *can* tell you that on the strength of *Dear Julia* alone, I'd buy *anything* he touches. {$3.50 ea. ppd / Black Eye Productions • 5135 Parc Ave #5 • Montreal, Quebec H2V 4G3 • Canada / (514) 274-8375} Illo © Brian Biggs



42) Usagi Yojimbo (Vol-3:S-12 / Stan Sakai / Dark Horse [4/96] / Vols 1 & 2 reprinted in 7 TPBs by Fantagraphics [1987] / OP: *Albedo*). Have you ever noticed that odd little occurrence that often takes place in published interviews, where after a professional finishes berating a particular title, he (or she) responds to the question "Have you ever read it?" with the astonishing and unapologetic answer of "No"? ... Well ... even though I've never been interviewed, I must plead guilty to a similar crime, in that I had "blacklisted" *Usagi* — sight unseen! — on the false pretext that it was just some foolish "funny animal" book. ... But after attending last summer's Eisner Award Ceremony in San Diego, watching Stan Sakai walk up to the podium time after time to collect these nice little awards, I decided to defer to the wiser minds in the room and give Usagi a try. .. Well, live and learn, you know? *Usagi Yojimbo* is a highly enjoyable series. ... Sure, you could probably describe it as *Lone Wolf & Cub - Lite*, since it also deals with the life of a wandering ronin, but *Usagi* has the advantage that it doesn't always take itself so seriously. Its solid characters, accurate historical backdrop, and high-drama are skillfully offset with a nice sense of humor and an appreciation for the universal joys of everyday life. .. One of the more relaxing (and easily digestible) books I've read. {TPBs: $14.95 ea. + $4 S&H / Fantagraphics • 7563 Lake City Way NE • Seattle, WA 98115 / Vol-3 issues: $2.95 ea. + $4 S&H / Dark Horse • 10956 SE Main St. • Milwaukie, OR 97222 / 1-800-862-0052} "Museum Exhibit" Insert © Stan Sakai


ARE THERE OTHER FACTORS?
OF COURSE. THE WRITING HAS TO BE EXCELLENT.-- FROM THE PLOT AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT TO THE TURN OF A PHRASE.
BUT AREN'T COMICS A VISUAL MEDIUM? ISN'T THE ARTWORK THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF A COMIC BOOK?

41) The Books of Ballads & Sagas (S-4 / Charles Vess (I) & various (W) / Green Man Press [1996]). It sure is refreshing to read a "fantasy" comic guided by a hand that understands the artistic pageantry, poetic prose, and ironic morality required to make one work. — So much better than witnessing the antics of "bad" elves, you know? — And not that Charles did it all himself, but his artistic talent and editorial eye have enabled him to create a harmonious series that also features some of the best writers in the business (e.g., Neil Gaiman & Rob Walton). {Sub.6.$20 / $3.95 ea ppd / Green Man Press • 10518 Rich Valley Rd. • Bristol, VA 24202} Illo © Charles Vess

40) The Replacement God (S-7 / Zander Cannon / Amaze Ink/Slave Labor [6/95]). I expect that we'll see a lot of great things from Zander Cannon over the years, as *The Replacement God* surely shows that he's one of the brightest young talents around. His "fantasy" series — about a benevolent young boy who's (inadvertently) prophesized to replace the god of death and overthrow a ruling dynasty — is as straight forward as it is subtly complicated. The story and characters are intricate, the artwork is (frankly) beautiful, and — not unlike the *great* works — I find myself enjoying the series as much for its insightful diversions as for its main story line. ... There's definitely a literary undercurrent here that's a cut above most comics {$2.95 ea + $3 S&H / Slave Labor • 979 S. Bascom Ave. • San Jose, CA 95128 • 1-800-866-8929} Illo © Zander Cannon

39) "The Works of James Kochalka" including (but not limited to): James Kochalka Superstar (S-9 / digest-size / James Kochalka [1994]), Little Mister Man (S-3 / Slave Labor Graphics [11/95]), Magic Boy & The Robot Elf (GN / Slave Labor [5/96]), Magic Boy & The Word of God (OS / James Kochalka [1996]), and Paradise Sucks (OS / Black Eye Productions [1997]). One of the things I enjoy most about the "small press" is watching its rising stars kick and scream as they're forcibly dragged into the "mainstream" (i.e., the "alternative comics industry"). And while I don't *really* think that my favorite "superstar" is kicking and screaming, his work has gained such (deserved) notoriety of late, that he can't help but move onto the next proving ground. ... It seems that Kochalka has *always* been a leading figure in the small press. If you've had any connection (at all) to that vast (and mythic) network of PO Boxes out there, you surely would have run into a few of his mini-comics or 'zine contributions. And even though his earlier efforts often came off "weird, just to be weird," his development as a writer and artist has imbued his recent comics with a level of coherency that has made them accessible, without compromising any of their introspective or experimental qualities. His most compelling works to date (*Magic Boy & The Word of God* and the more recent issues of *James Kochalka Superstar*) cleverly blend a superficial cartoony-ness with a just-under-the-surface, disturbing quality that gives the stories their insight and power. ... I highly recommend that you send James a few bucks to sample his wares. I think you'll agree that he's a superstar on the rise {*Superstar* #1-#9. $2.25 ea. ppd & *MB&TWoG*. $3.95 ppd / James Kochalka • PO Box 8321 • Burlington, VT 05402 // *MB&TRE*: $9.95 & *Little Mister Man* $2.95 ea. + $3 S&H / Slave Labor Graphics • 979 S. Bascom Ave. • San Jose, CA 95128 • 1-800-866-8929} "Museum Exhibit" Inserts © James Kochalka

38) Arcade (8-DS / anthology / edited by Art Spiegelman & Bill Griffith / The Print Mint [1975]). An important historical anthology in that it showcased the editorial and cartooning talents of those who would eventually create *Raw* & *Weirdo* (the two most important post-underground / pre-alternative anthologies). And aside from the (maybe, too many) stories that didn't work too well, the highlights that made the anthology a classic were: Robert Crumb's political diatribes and sketchbook drawings; Art Spiegelman's daring (though, not always successful) pre-*Raw* experimentations with the medium; Kim Deitch's odd tales of past "truths," Spain's powerful (and completely coherent) historical documentaries; and the "Arcade Archives," where rare, turn-of-the-century "underground" comics were reprinted. {#2, #4, #5, #6, & #7 (set): $20 + $4 S&H / Fantagraphics • 7563 Lake City Way NE • Seattle, WA 98115 / 1-800-657-1100}

ACTUALLY, IT'S THE CONTRARY FOR ME. IF IT'S NOT WELL WRITTEN, THEN THE WHOLE THING'S JUST BUILT ON SAND.
IT'S JUST LIKE IN THE MOVIES. I MEAN, "TITS AND DEATH" MAY SATISFY SOME ADOLESCENT FANTASY, BUT THEY WON'T CURE A BAD SCRIPT, EVER.
NO!
CRUNCH
CRUNCH

37) Scenes From The Inside (S-7 / mag-size / anthology / edited by David Leavesley & Matthew Burton / Drat'n'Blast Books [1994]). One of my greatest pleasures in comics is to be introduced to a book that is so good, that I actually get embarrassed that I hadn't heard of it before. And that happened last year (in spades) when my good friend, Brett Warnock — of *Top Shelf* fame — introduced me to this "top" notch British anthology. From the innovative stories by professionals whom I hadn't previously heard of, to the polished production values of the anthology itself, *Scenes From The Inside* is a definite winner. ... Be sure to check out the "Pud & Pup" stories by Matthew Burton and Abi Stubbs. The next British invasion is obviously on its way. {#4-#6 in USA: $5 ea. ppd / Brett Warnock • Primal Groove Press • PO Box 15125 • Portland, OR 97293 // OR from England: #2-#6: $5.50 ea. ppd, #7:$11 ppd / Sub:4:$22 / Drat'n'Blast Books • Box 63 • 82 Colston St. • Bristol BS1 5BB • United Kingdom}

36) Top Shelf (S-4 / anthology / edited by Brett Warnock / Primal Groove Press [1995]). The best showcase of the next generation of alternative comics superstars! ... Brett Warnock, the publisher of Primal Groove Press, has come up with a really neat idea: to provide a professional forum for the brightest talent in the "small press" scene. ... Not only has there never been such a professionally-produced anthology for the rising stars of mini-comics before, but Brett's keen editorial eye has enabled him to quickly focus on the cartoonists most likely to make a mark in this industry. ... Of course, I was already familiar with the works of a few of the featured cartoonists (like James Kochalka, Tom Hart, and John Porcellino), but I was also introduced to a gold mine of new talent (namely Gheena, Kns Stacks, David Freemont, Gavin McInnes, etc.). ... Order this book, as it will open your eyes to another fascinating dimension of the comics industry! {$5 ea. ppd / Primal Groove Press • PO Box 15125 • Portland, OR 97293 / Ask for his catalog of really cool minis too!} Illo © Tom Hart

35) Action Girl (S-10 / anthology / edited by Sarah Dyer / Slave Labor Graphics [8/94]). Sarah Dyer has done a superb job of producing a — well, let me just quote her, she said it best! — "girl-positive and female-friendly" [anthology that's] "never anti-boy." Though it deals with some pretty serious subjects, this anthology has a nice, light-hearted feel to it, that makes it accessible to most audiences. My favorite contributor is definitely Elizabeth Watasin, whose stories are whimsical, playfully sexy, and pure fun; but the series also showcases many other talented and well-known cartoonists (e.g., Roberta Gregory, Jessica Abel, Patty Leidy, Megan Kelso, Rebecca Dart, She-Ra, Anel Bordeaux, Carol Seatory, Carolyn Ridsdale, Chris Tobey, Kris Dresen, Amanda Lewis, Jennifer Sorensen, and Stephanie Gladden of *The Simpsons* fame). ... All women; and isn't it about time? {#1-#3: $2.50 ea., #4-#9: $2.75 ea. + $3 S&H <Note: #8 is the all-Elizabeth Watasin issue. You *gotta* get that one!> / Slave Labor Graphics • 979 S. Bascom Ave. • San Jose, CA 95128 • 1-800-866-8929} Illo © Elizabeth Watasin

34) The Adventures of A-Girl! (S-4 / digest-size / Elizabeth Watasin / Elizabeth Watasin [1993]) *A-Girl!* is a fun-loving and alluring mini-comic that examines gender stereotypes and sexual freedom in a very positive, effective, and non-preachy manner. The artwork is strongly manga influenced —which I love! — but it also possesses a rare power (not unlike that of Eddie Campbell) in that it contains an incredible amount of emotional detail in a few, deceptively casual pen strokes ... I must admit that I have fallen in love with her artwork in a way that has only happened once before with that of Jaime Hernandez (and that's saying something!). ... Pick up her mini-comics and be sure to check out her stories in *Action Girl* as well. {*A-Girl!* #1-#4, *A-Girl Misc!* #1, & *A-Girl Etc!* #1-#2 are $1 ea. ppd / Elizabeth Watasin • 120 So. San Fernando Blvd., #231 • Burbank, CA 91502-1321} "Museum Exhibit" Inserts © Elizabeth Watasin

SO, WHERE DOES THE ARTWORK FIT INTO THE PICTURE, THEN ?
THE ARTWORK IS THE THING THAT DRAWS YOU IN, AND IT'S ALSO THE ICING ON THE CAKE.
IF IT'S INNOVATIVE AND ENGAGING, AND WORKS WITH THE WRITING IN A WAY TO MAXIMIZE THE POTENTIAL OF THE MEDIUM, THEN IT'S AN ABSOLUTELY AMAZING THING TO WITNESS.
A-GIRL

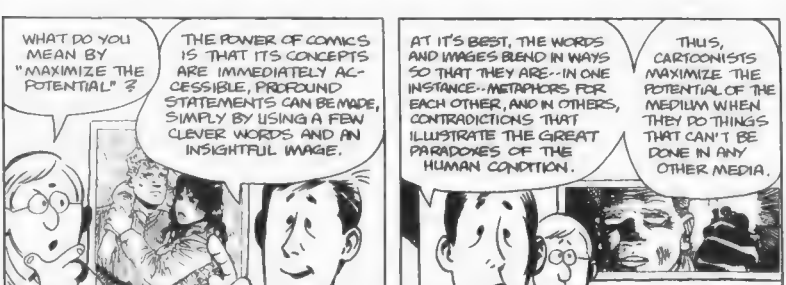
33) Strange Growths (S-12 / digest-size / Jenny Zervakis / Jenny Zervakis [1991]). One of the most insightful mini-comics on the market. The artwork may be a little crude, but these personal tales are so poignantly written, and possess so much insight into the human condition, that you can't help but become a fan. ... A great place to start exploring the works of the small press. {#1-#10,#12:$1 ea., #11:$1.50, and *Super Growths* #1 (the best of #1-#6):$2 ppd / Jenny Zervakis • 909 Lancaster Street • Durham, NC 27701} Illo © Jenny Zervakis

32) Six Degrees (S-5 / Martin Shipp (W) & Marc Laming (I) / Heretic Press & High Heels Productions [1995]) One of the most impressive books to come out of England in the last couple of years. Taking place in two different centuries (the 19th and 20th), this highly suspenseful mystery tells the tale of two child-murder investigations *so well*, that the similarity between them becomes no less than sinister. ... Martin Shipp's writing is superb. His intricate plotting, genuine character development, and eloquent prose immediately reminded me of (a young) Alan Moore; it was *that* crafty. And Marc Laming's rough-hewn and captivating artwork perfectly (and simultaneously) contrasted the decay of the former era with the decadence of the latter. ... Definitely worth sending a check to England for {$2.95 ea. + $4 S&H / High Heels Productions • 95 Fisherton Street • Salisbury, Wiltshire SP2 7QY • England / 01144-1722-410242 // Correspondence to: Heretic Press • 40 Fenton Road • Tottenham • London N17 7JR • England} Illo © Marc Laming & Martin Shipp

31) One Life Furnished In Early Moorcock a.k.a. Elric #0: One Life (OS / Neil Gaiman (W) & P. Craig Russell (I) / Topps Comics [1996]). This one-shot was designed to kick off P. Craig Russell's new *Elric* series. But the piece turned out so nice that I'd recommend it as a stand alone work. ... Of course, there's no need to belabor the fact that a Gaiman story would be worth reading ... duh .... but what makes this book special is its playful examination of that time in a boy's life when identifying with potent idols is so important. {local retailer}

30) Blab! (S-8 / anthology / edited by Monte Beauchamp / Kitchen Sink Press [1986]). One of the best anthologies of the eighties and nineties. Through its combination of irreverent editorials, articles, and comics, this publication set *the* standard for quality in the 'zine and comix movement. Check out the issues still in print, as you'll witness contributions from the elite of *Raw* and *Weirdo*, as well as ground-breaking work from cartoonists currently at the forefront of the alternative comics scene. {#1: $6.95, #5:$7.95, #6:$7.95, #7:$8.95, & #8:$16.95 + $7.50 S&H / Kitchen Sink Press • 320 Riverside Drive • Northampton, MA 01060 / 1-800-365-7465}

29) Lost In The Alps (CGN / Cosey / ComicsLit/NBM [1996] / OP: *Cheval Noir* [1984]). Every time I see a European graphic novel that has — by some miracle — been translated into English, I am almost always overwhelmed by the level of its artistic craftsmanship. It's as if the artists were all formally trained at the best schools, and that each of them developed their own individual style *through* craft, rather than trying to immediately define themselves. Now, this is by no means an indictment of "our own" cartoonists (whom I love just the same!), it's just an observation that makes me, on one hand, celebrate the great diversity in the medium, and on the other, appreciate the efforts of publishers like NBM who introduce us to works of this caliber. ... *Lost In The Alps* follows a British writer who finds inspiration while on a quest to reconcile the memory of his deceased brother. ... A poignant story, brilliantly illustrated by the Swiss artist, Cosey. {$13.95 + $2 S&H / NBM • 185 Madison Ave, Suite 1504 • New York, NY 10016 / 1-800-886-1223} "Museum Exhibit" Inserts © Cosey


WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "MAXIMIZE THE POTENTIAL"?
THE POWER OF COMICS IS THAT ITS CONCEPTS ARE IMMEDIATELY ACCESSIBLE, PROFOUND STATEMENTS CAN BE MADE, SIMPLY BY USING A FEW CLEVER WORDS AND AN INSIGHTFUL IMAGE.
AT IT'S BEST, THE WORDS AND IMAGES BLEND IN WAYS SO THAT THEY ARE--IN ONE INSTANCE--METAPHORS FOR EACH OTHER, AND IN OTHERS, CONTRADICTIONS THAT ILLUSTRATE THE GREAT PARADOXES OF THE HUMAN CONDITION.
THUS, CARTOONISTS MAXIMIZE THE POTENTIAL OF THE MEDIUM WHEN THEY DO THINGS THAT CAN'T BE DONE IN ANY OTHER MEDIA.

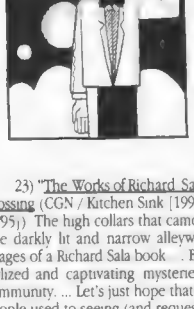
28) Invasion of the Mind Sappers (GN / Carol Swain / Fantagraphics [1/96]), and Way Out Strips (Vol-3.4-DS / Carol Swain / Fantagraphics [2/94] // Vol-2.3-DS [5/92] & Vol-1.3-DS [1991] OP: Tragedy Strikes Press). Finally, a *whole* Carol Swain story in one chunk! Now, that's the way her stories were *meant* to be read! ... *Invasion of the Mind Sappers* deals with an "alien" who gets in trouble for understanding the human race all too well; and three punk teens who, in spite of themselves, figure out exactly what's going on. ... The strength of Carol's work lies in its charcoal images (which wash over you like a melancholy, gray day) and her rebellious characters, who perfectly capture the comical and apathetic musings of any young generation. ... And even though I (kind of) ragged on *Way Out Strips* last issue for running too many different stories in parallel; this time I'll just recommend that you find a run of issues before you read them. ... Her work is just too expressive to be missed. {*Invasion*:$8.95 & *WOS* (Vol-3) #1-#4: $2.75 ea. + $4 S&H / Fantagraphics • 7563 Lake City Way NE • Seattle, WA 98115 / 1-800-657-1100} Illo © Carol Swain

27) Suckle: The Status of Basil (GN / Dave Cooper / Fantagraphics [1/96]) and Crumple (currently serialized in *Zero Zero* #11-up / Dave Cooper / Fantagraphics [8/96]). *Suckle* is a story about a young man's wayward search for love. And though he has to wade through a (pretty wild) minefield of sex to find it, he eventually learns that its the only thing worth having. And *Crumple*, Dave's current project, covers similar ground, examining all the misguided influences we face on our way to figuring out who we (really) are. .. Dave Cooper is one of my favorite cartoonists working today. His artistic vision is unique, and (oddly enough) his work is as visually endearing as it is down right shocking and disturbing .. Now, to be honest, I don't think that his storytelling has matured quite as quickly as his artwork. I also think that he's probably cost himself a few readers with his (shall we say, "slightly") garish portrayal of sex in situations that may not have always called for it. .. But I surely wouldn't hold that against him, as he's a man of daring, and he's definitely on his way to being one of the premier (and most recognizable) cartoonists in the industry. {*Suckle* $15.95 & *Zero Zero* #11+up $3.95 ea. + $4 S&H / Fantagraphics • 7563 Lake City Way NE • Seattle, WA 98115 / 1-800-657-1100} Illo & "Museum Exhibit" Inserts (in left panel) © Dave Cooper

26) The Silent Invasion (12-MS / Michael Cherkas (W&I) & Larry Hancock (W) / Caliber [5/96] // formerly 4-CGN / NBM [5/88] // OP: Renegade Press), and Suburban Nightmares (2-CGN / Larry Hancock (W) & Michael Cherkas / NBM [Vol-1 [3/90] / Vol-2 [10/96]). Cherkas and Hancock have created one of the most atmospheric comics in the biz. Perfectly capturing that odd era in the fifties (when the fascination with everything science was being replaced by fear), these two related series cleverly use suspense and humor to create a world in which secret government conspiracies and alien invasions lurk around every corner. — Wait a minute! That's *our* world! ... And even though the cliffhangers often leave you with more questions than answers, both titles will transport you back to the fifties, and make you feel like you're witnessing *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* deep from within *The Twilight Zone*. {*SI*: Vol #1-#4: $10 ea. & *SN*:Vol #1-#2 $12 ea. + $2 S&H / NBM • 185 Madison Ave. Suite 1504 • New York, NY 10016 / 1-800-886-1223 // *SI* issues: $2.95 ea. + $3 S&H / Caliber Back Issues • 225 North Sheldon Rd. • Plymouth, MI 48170 • (888) 22-COMIC} Illo & "Museum Exhibit" Insert (in right panel) © Michael Cherkas & Larry Hancock

HOW DO YOU DECIDE IF SOMETHING MEETS ALL THESE CRITERIA ?
WELL, I DON'T KEEP A SCORECARD OR ANYTHING. IT'S MORE OF A FEELING THAT BUILDS AS I READ THE STORY AS A WHOLE.
AT SOME POINT, IT EITHER MEETS THE CRITERIA OR IT DOESN'T. IT'S REALLY AN INTUITIVE PROCESS.

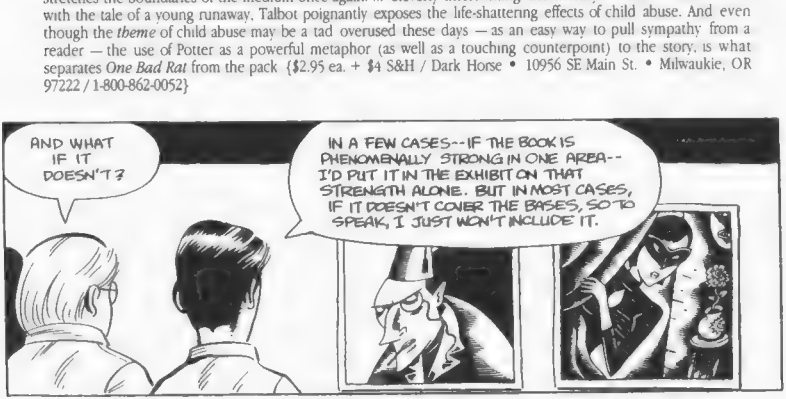
25) Wordsmith (9-MS / Dave Darrigo (W) & R. G. Taylor (I) / Caliber Press [1996] // OP- 12-MS / Renegade Press [8/85]). *Wordsmith* follows the life and career of Clay Washburn, a penny-a-word pulp fiction writer in the early thirties. And as we look over his shoulder, we not only witness tales of adventure spring to life, we also learn something about the difficult process of writing itself. ... But really, that's just part of it, as Darrigo and Taylor have unbelievably managed to capture a *complete* life here. From Clay's day-to-day struggles with relationships, publishers, and the almighty dollar, to his introspective aspirations and moral dilemmas, we actually get to watch the multi-dimensional way that life truly exists. ... One of the more timeless masterpieces out there. {$2.95 ea. + $3 S&H / Caliber Back Issues • 225 North Sheldon Rd. • Plymouth, MI 48170 • (888) 22-COMIC} Illo © R. G. Taylor & Dave Darrigo



24) Red Calloway's Big Bang (4-MS / mag-size / Paul Sharar / Zoo Arsonist Press [7/95]). *Red Calloway's Big Bang* is a street-level drama that slices open the underbelly of the Hollywood scene. It examines the "sex sells" phenomenon, and exposes the moguls, starlets, and leading men for the kinks, prostitutes, and mindless fools they (often) are. And just the fact that I got *aroused* by the book, illustrated even further — to my enjoyment *and* shame — that Hollywood really *does* target our baser instincts. ... I really can't say enough about this book. Sure, the influences of Daniel Clowes and Los Bros Hernandez are definitely apparent, but Paul has such an extraordinary sense of design, pacing, and subtext, that it's hard to comprehend that this is a freshman effort from a recent college graduate. . I'll tell ya', if I was a publisher, I'd be knocking on this guy's door right now (just a hint). ... Order *Red Calloway's Big Bang* while you still can, and keep an eye out for his new projects as well: *Clock!*, a goofball comedy series of gags, jokes, and short stories; and *Manning Town*, a four-issue mini-series about an oncoming war and its effect on a town. {#1-#3:$3 ea. ppd / #4:$4 ppd / Zoo Arsonist Press • PO Box 6322 • San Pedro, CA 90734} Illo © Paul Sharar

23) "The Works of Richard Sala" including (but not limited to): Hypnotic Tales (CGN / Kitchen Sink [1992]), Black Cat Crossing (CGN / Kitchen Sink [1995]), & The Chuckling Whatzit (currently serialized in *Zero Zero* #2 & up / Fantagraphics [5/95]) The high collars that camouflage men on devious missions. The darting eyes of women with agendas of their own. The darkly lit and narrow alleyways where the night's most sinister motives are played out. ... These are the lingering images of a Richard Sala book . . But like many of his peers who don't publish a "regular series," I'm afraid that his highly stylized and captivating mysteries aren't always on the shelves — and therefore, the minds — of the alternative comics community. ... Let's just hope that *Zero Zero*'s serialization of his most ambitious work to date, *The Chuckling Whatzit*, gets people used to seeing (and requesting) his work on a more regular basis. ... He surely deserves it. {*BCC*:$10.95 & *HT*:$8.95 + $6.50 S&H / Kitchen Sink Press • 320 Riverside Drive • Northampton, MA 01060 / 1-800-365-7465 // *TCW*(in *Zero Zero* #2-up) $3.95 ea + $4 S&H / Fantagraphics • 7563 Lake City Way NE • Seattle, WA 98115 / 1-800-657-1100 } "Museum Exhibit" Inserts © Richard Sala

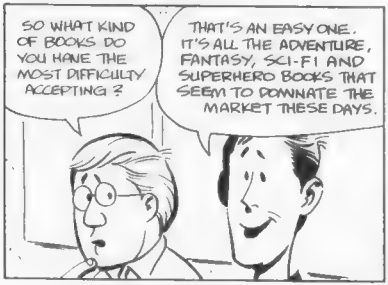
22) The Tale of One Bad Rat (4-MS‡ / Bryan Talbot / Dark Horse [10/94]) Bryan Talbot may not publish that often, but when he does ... watch out! His influence from the eighties can *still* be felt, and this current mini-series stretches the boundaries of the medium once again. ... Cleverly intertwining the literary works of Beatrix Potter with the tale of a young runaway, Talbot poignantly exposes the life-shattering effects of child abuse. And even though the *theme* of child abuse may be a tad overused these days — as an easy way to pull sympathy from a reader — the use of Potter as a powerful metaphor (as well as a touching counterpoint) to the story, is what separates *One Bad Rat* from the pack {$2.95 ea. + $4 S&H / Dark Horse • 10956 SE Main St. • Milwaukie, OR 97222 / 1-800-862-0052}


AND WHAT IF IT DOESN'T?
IN A FEW CASES--IF THE BOOK IS PHENOMENALLY STRONG IN ONE AREA-- I'D PUT IT IN THE EXHIBIT ON THAT STRENGTH ALONE. BUT IN MOST CASES, IF IT DOESN'T COVER THE BASES, SO TO SPEAK, I JUST WON'T INCLUDE IT.

21) Big Numbers (2-DS / Alan Moore (W) & Bill Sienkiewicz (I) / Mad Love [4/90].) Rumor has it that some ugly business was behind the abrupt discontinuation of this series. Now, I don't *know* what happened, and I don't *wanna* know what happened, but it saddens me *to know* that we'll never get to see this project finished. . . The series dealt with the random convergence of people's lives, and the dysfunctional aspects of life that are (usually) hidden behind the public curtain. And as another example of words and images at their collective best, it detailed the full canopy of life in a rich, vibrant, and highly intriguing manner . . So even if only two issues (and a bootleg xerox of number three) were ever released, I'd still recommend that you give *Big Numbers* a try . Just pretend that Alan's taking his sweet time with it. *That* shouldn't be too hard. {Out of print} Illo © Bill Sienkiewicz & Alan Moore

20) "The Works of Ted McKeever" including (but not limited to): Industrial Gothic (5-MS / Vertigo/DC [12/95]), Metropol (CGN / Blue Eyed Dog [1995]), and Plastic Forks (5-MS / Epic/Marvel Comics [1990]). Though his stories don't *always* hit the mark, Ted McKeever's dystopian artistic vision stands out as a paramount achievement in comics. His stories usually center around a few good-hearted (and seriously flawed) individuals who try to build a future in a world gone bad. And whether it's his apocalyptic messages of redemption, or his commentary on society's condemnation of people who aren't aesthetically pleasing, McKeever's artwork will leave you with a frightening reminder of who we are and where we might be headed. {*Metropol* $25 + $5 S&H / Blue Eyed Dog • Second Floor • 2-4 Vestry Street • London N1 7RE • England / Others: local retailer} Illo © Ted McKeever

19) Tug & Buster (S-5 / Marc Hempel / Art & Soul Comics [11/95]) Since culture will always have more to do with tradition than common sense, it's imperative that a society gaze upon itself to better understand what it *should* be. And if that society is armed with free speech and the artist, then a bright and shining mirror will always be available to clearly reflect the societal traditions that no longer make sense. For example: What is a man? What does he value? And how should he behave in society? ... Often I think that men — *and* women, for that matter — don't ever *really* look in the mirror, or that if they do, the dirt of culture has clouded the image that *needs* to be seen. .. Now, I know that this is a rather heavy review for a book that's as funny as this one is. But *Tug & Buster* is really an amazing achievement. It's not only the hilarious adventure of an "ideal" man (Tug) and his pip-squeak sidekick (Buster), but it's also a clear reflection of all of the nonsensical "machismo" that exists in our society. Hempel has wiped the mirror clean, and cleverly reflected his story in a way that makes it as palatable as it is potentially life changing. My catch phrase "intelligent and innovative" really epitomizes this effort, and it's hard to believe that Hempel even pulled it off. . I highly recommend it. {$2.95 ea. + $3 S&H / Art & Soul Comics • 7844 Saint Thomas Drive • Baltimore, MD 21236} Illo & "Museum Exhibit" Insert © Marc Hempel


SO WHAT KIND OF BOOKS DO YOU HAVE THE MOST DIFFICULTY ACCEPTING?
THAT'S AN EASY ONE. IT'S ALL THE ADVENTURE, FANTASY, SCI-FI AND SUPERHERO BOOKS THAT SEEM TO DOMINATE THE MARKET THESE DAYS.
THESE PLOT-ORIENTED COMICS STILL CLING TO THE "GOOD OL" GOLDEN AGE AND SILVER AGE OF COMICS AND LACK ANY SORT OF INWARD GAZE.

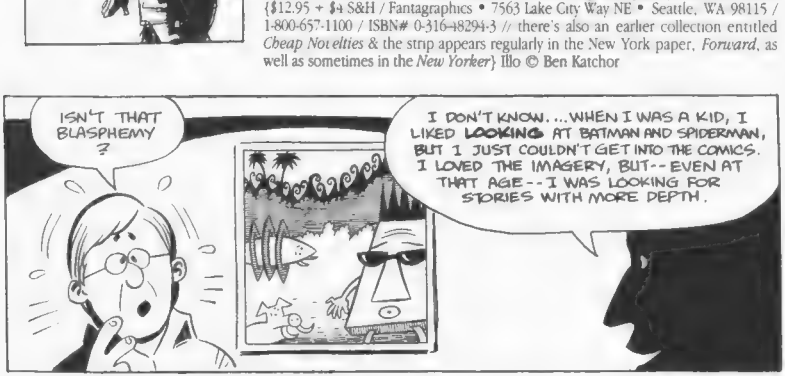
18) Daddy's Girl (CGN / Debbie Drechsler / Fantagraphics [2/96]), and Nowhere (S-1 / Debbie Drechsler / Drawn & Quarterly [10/96]). I have always been moved by Debbie's disturbing tales of childhood. Since her stories were usually featured in a variety of anthologies, however, it has been difficult to point people in a particular direction. But now, with Fantagraphics' release of her first compilation graphic novel, and Drawn & Quarterly's debut of her first ongoing series, I can easily say, "read these!" ... Her graphic novel deals with the effects of child abuse. Even though that's a show stopper in its own right, what makes the story sublime is Debbie's ability to combine a child's introspective thoughts of inadequacy, guilt, and despair, with the wide-eyed curiosity and resilient optimism that kids are best known for.

And with her new series, *Nowhere*, she's begun to experiment with a longer, fictional narrative, exploring the ups and downs of the teen years. ... I'm glad to see that she's finally getting the (consolidated) attention that she deserves. {*Daddy's Girl*: $9.95 + $4 S&H / Fantagraphics • 7563 Lake City Way NE • Seattle, WA 98115 / 1-800-657-1100 // *Nowhere*: $3.75 ppd / Drawn & Quarterly • PO Box 48056 • Montreal, Quebec H2V 4S8 / (514) 279-2221} Illo © Debbie Drechsler

I WANTED SO BAD FOR IT TO BE JUST ANOTHER BAD DREAM, BUT NO SUCH LUCK.
YOU'RE MINE FIRST, HONEY. NO ONE COULD EVER LOVE YOU THE WAY I DO. HOW COULD THEY?

17) Fleener (S-2 / Mary Fleener / Zongo/Bongo [1996]). The Queen of Comics Cubism recently abandoned her autobiographical trek to venture into the experimental world of *Fleener* — and what a wonderful and magical place *that* is! From her wordless tale of peace, love, tiki-gods, and (of course) surfing, to her culinary tale of a few frazzled (and anthropomorphic) restaurateurs planning to take a vacation, Mary's imagination sings out with the true spirit of what makes life worth living... Definitely the best book in the Zongo line. {$2.95 ea. + $3 S&H / Zongo Comics • 1999 Avenue of the Stars • 15th Floor • Los Angeles, CA 90067} "Museum Exhibit" Insert © Mary Fleener

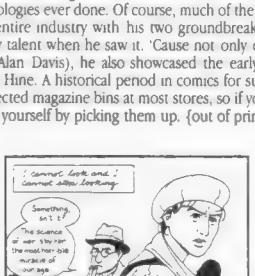
16) Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer (CGN / Ben Katchor / Brown, Little & Co [1996]) Though they are quite hard to find — as, for some reason, the comic-strip format makes them unappealing for comic-book stores, and their utter sophistication makes them an anathema for book stores carrying *Garfield* — the collections of Ben Katchor's weekly newspaper strip, *Julius Knipl*, are a must find for the literary reader. Being an example of what a newspaper strip *could* be (if subtlety and insight were an important thing anymore), *Julius Knipl* tracks the odd and often pleasantly inane aspects of the nameless inhabitants of the "big city" (New York). Told around the lead character, these (usually) 8-panel strips combine an avant-garde feel with a comfortable nostalgia for the oddities of old New York. ... And if you're willing to invest your time into reading just *one* page, you will uncover countless gems of inner truth. ... I just hope that I can track down the other collected volume(s) some day, as I feel like one of his "typical" characters who's on an eternal quest for something that plainly does not exist. {$12.95 + $4 S&H / Fantagraphics • 7563 Lake City Way NE • Seattle, WA 98115 / 1-800-657-1100 / ISBN# 0-316-48294-3 // there's also an earlier collection entitled *Cheap Novelties* & the strip appears regularly in the New York paper, *Forward*, as well as sometimes in the *New Yorker*} Illo © Ben Katchor


ISN'T THAT BLASPHEMY?
I DON'T KNOW. ...WHEN I WAS A KID, I LIKED LOOKING AT BATMAN AND SPIDERMAN, BUT I JUST COULDN'T GET INTO THE COMICS. I LOVED THE IMAGERY, BUT--EVEN AT THAT AGE--I WAS LOOKING FOR STORIES WITH MORE DEPTH.

15) Confessions of a Cereal Eater! (CGN / Rob Maisch (W) & Bo Hampton (I), Scott Hampton (I), Rand Holmes (I), and Sandy Plunkhett (I) / NBM [1995] / OP: *ComicsLit Magazine* #1 [1995]) While last year's *Report* singled out Rob Maisch's "Klingon Battle Helmet" as one of the funniest stories of the year, this year's *Report* is celebrating the fact that NBM decided to collect *all* of his stories into one finely-bound graphic novel. ... Rob's autobiographical stories transport you back to those mischievous days of childhood almost better than anyone. And without a hint of "navel gazing," he captures the richness of life in a way that is both captivating and suspenseful. ... Of course, it doesn't hurt that he's best buddies with such fine (and respected) artists as Scott and Bo Hampton — some guys have all the luck! But somehow, I think I'd be reading his stories even without them. He's *that* good. {$17.95 + $2 S&H / NBM • 185 Madison Ave, Suite 1504 • New York, NY 10016 / 1-800-886-1223} Illo © Scott Hampton & Rob Maisch

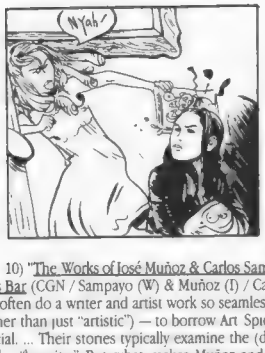
14) Tales From The Bog (S-5† / Marcus Lusk / Aberration Press [11/95]). If I had to predict which comic was going to be the next "*Bone*," I'd have to go with *Tales From The Bog*. And *no*, it's not because they both have a little *Pogo* in them. It's because the book is just ... fantastic! ... *Tales From The Bog* combines the universal appeal of a newspaper strip with the narrative eloquence found in better graphic novels. It perfectly captures the cadence of southern living, while at the same time executing an insightful parody of the comics industry. It's big and bold, and all of its large-nosed and anthropomorphic characters are as individually unique as they are immediately endearing. . . If you're a "collector," or just a person who looks upon the world with wide-eyed wonder, take a trip down to *The Bog*. This way you can say you've been there, before the rest of the world calls it home. {#2-#4: $2.95 ea. ppd / TPB(#1-#4). $6.95 ppd / Sub:6-$18 ppd / Marcus Lusk • Aberration Press • 416 Cahaba Park Circle, Suite #107-B • Birmingham, AL 35242} "Museum Exhibit" Inserts © Marcus Lusk

13) Warrior (26-DS / anthology / mag-size / edited by Dez Skinn / Quality Communications Ltd. {3/82}). You'd think that after I listed *V for Vendetta* and *Miracleman* as two of my all-time favorite books in last year's issue, that I would have remembered to give *Warrior* it's stand-alone due. ... But what do you know? I forgot! ... *Warrior* is definitely one of the best anthologies ever done. Of course, much of the credit goes to Alan Moore himself — who was in the process of revolutionizing the entire industry with his two groundbreaking story lines — but you also have to give credit to editor Dez Skinn, who knew talent when he saw it. 'Cause not only did he run Alan Moore's stories (with artwork by David Lloyd, Garry Leach, and Alan Davis), he also showcased the early work of such notables as Dave Gibbons, John Bolton, Grant Morrison, and Dave Hine. A historical period in comics for sure. ... As an aside, you can usually find these large and attractive issues in the neglected magazine bins at most stores, so if you want to see *V* or *Miracleman* in their original black and white splendor, treat yourself by picking them up. {out of print}



12) Berlin (LS-3 / Jason Lutes / Black Eye Productions [4/96]). With only three issues out, I can already tell that this book is going to be a masterpiece. Set in pre-World War II Berlin (circa 1928), the book examines the intersecting lives of a journalist, Kurt Severing, and an artist, Marthe Müller, as the political drama of World War II unfolds. And even though I really liked *Jar of Fools* (as last year's *Report* can attest), this book puts Jason in a whole new class of cartoonists ... Can't wait to see the next issue. {$2.50 ea. ppd / Black Eye Productions • 5135 Parc Ave #5 • Montreal, Quebec H2V 4G3 • Canada / (514) 274-8375} Illo © Jason Lutes

WELL THEN, HOW DID YOU END UP BEING A QUASI-PROMOTER OF COMICS WHEN YOU DIDN'T EVEN LIKE THEM AS A KID?
THAT'S A LONG STORY... JUST SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT I DISCOVERED ALAN MOORE A FEW YEARS BACK WHEN THE SMELL OF OLD PAPER LURED ME INTO A LOCAL COMIC-BOOK SHOP.
SO YOU BECAME A CRITIC OF SORTS?
WELL, I WANTED TO BECOME A CRITIC, BUT I HAD TO KNOW MY COMPETITION FIRST. THAT'S HOW I GOT INTO THE PROMOTION END OF THINGS.

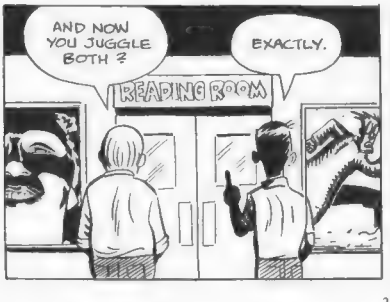


11) Buzz Buzz Comics Magazine (S-1 / XL-size / Paul Pope / Horse Press [5/96]), Giant THB Parade (OS / XL-size / Paul Pope / Horse Press [10/96]), and P City Parade (OS / XL-size / Paul Pope / Horse Press [1997]). Though I've already sung the praises of the prolific Paul Pope in last year's issue, these three extra-large and extraordinary collections of comic stories and editorials warrant a little extra plug. These reasonably-priced jumbles of joy are a great place to get introduced to the budding genius behind *THB*, *The Ballad of Dr. Richardson* and *Sin Titulo*. The artwork is big, fast, playfully sexy, and totally original. ... Jump on board and see why Kondansha, one of Japan's largest manga publisher — which dwarfs the *entire* U.S. comics industry — has recently entered into a long-term relationship with him {$4.95 each + $2 S&H / Horse Press • PO Box 3112 • Columbus, OH 43210-0112} Illo © Paul Pope

10) "The Works of José Muñoz & Carlos Sampayo" including (but not limited to): Sinner (5-DS / Fantagraphics [10/87]), Joe's Bar (CGN / Sampayo (W) & Muñoz (I) / Catalan Communications [9/87]), & Billy Holiday (GN / Fantagraphics [3/93]). Not often do a writer and artist work so seamlessly that their work speaks as one. And the fact that their work is true "art" (rather than just "artistic") — to borrow Art Spiegelman's terminology — makes their unified accomplishments even more special. ... Their stories typically examine the (dilapidated) lives of people who, willingly or otherwise, have been eaten up by the "big city." But what makes Muñoz and Sampayo's work so profound, is their ability to expose mankind's baser instincts while paradoxically providing the deepest empathy for the human condition. {*Sinner* #3-#5: $2.95 ea. & *Billie Holiday*. $7.95 + $4 S&H / Fantagraphics • 7563 Lake City Way NE • Seattle, WA 98115 / 1-800-657-1100 // *Joe's Bar*: out of print} "Museum Exhibit" Insert (on the left) © José Muñoz & Carlos Sampayo

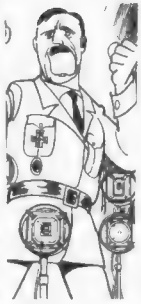
9) "The Works of Peter Kuper" including (this year's additions): The System (3-MS / Vertigo Vérité/DC Comics [5/96]), and Eye of the Beholder (CGN / NBM [1996]). Peter Kuper is one of the most important cartoonists working today. Why? Because his work is not bound by the medium. It could be hung in museums, circulated in the most elite literary circles, or spray painted on a city wall. His work is the embodiment of art and speaks as a true reflection of who we are. ... *The System* is a silent tale that playfully examines the random intersections of life in the Big Apple. And *Eye of the Beholder* is a compilation of wordless, five-panel stories, where each fifth panel cleverly illustrates how personal our perspectives can be, and how easy it is to become intolerant of others. ... Definitely pick up something — anything! — by Peter Kuper {*The System*: local retailer / *Eye of the Beholder*: $8.95 + $2 S&H / NBM • 185 Madison Ave, Suite 1504 • New York, NY 10016 / 1-800-886-1223} "Museum Exhibit" Insert (on the right) © Peter Kuper

8) Introducing Kafka (GN / Robert Crumb / Kitchen Sink Press [5/94]). This biography of Kafka is a paramount achievement in comics. Not only was the graphic novel educational (making it a perfect college textbook), but it was also highly entertaining. Of course, it's no surprise that Crumb would produce an entertaining comic book, but his accomplishment was in making it captivating, while avoiding any sensationalism that would have corrupted the book's historical accuracy ... It's a perfect example of how comics can be used to make serious education palatable. Let's hope we see more like it. ... And to think that the book inspired me to put some "real" books back in my diet — what's this world coming to? {$11.95 + $4.50 S&H / Kitchen Sink Press • 320 Riverside Drive • Northampton, MA 01060 / 1-800-365-7465} Illo © Robert Crumb



IN FACT, IF YOU'D LIKE TO STEP INTO THE READING ROOM WE'VE SET UP, I CAN GIVE YOU A COPY OF THE PROGRAM I PUT TOGETHER FOR THE EXHIBIT. IT GIVES YOU ALL THE REVIEWS AND ORDERING INFORMATION FOR THE COMICS ON DISPLAY.
SURE. I'D LIKE THAT.
READING

7) Adolf (5-GN / Osamu Tezuka / Cadence Books [11/95]). I recently read two *fantastic* books — *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics* (Frederik L. Schodt / Kondansha [1983/1986] / ISBN# 0-87011-752-1 / 260-pgs / $22) & *Dreamland Japan* (Frederik L. Schodt / Stone Bridge Press [1996] / 360-pgs / $19.95 postpaid) — which, among many other things, really clarified for me why Osamu Tezuka is called the ***manga no kamisama*** (literally, "The God of Comics"). Not only did he reinvent the entire medium, he set it on a course that made it *particularly* Japanese. I am in awe over the success that he and his peers have achieved in Japan, and can only hope that "we" too can one day achieve the same level of wide-spread acceptance over here. ... Set in World War II Japan, *Adolf* details the intersecting lives of Adolf Kamil (a Jewish boy living in Japan), Adolf Haufman (his "friend" of German/Japanese descent), and, of course, Adolf Hitler. The story is told by Sohei, a Japanese journalist, whose brother was killed for possessing a document that proved Adolf Hitler was a Jew. ... The intricate and suspenseful nature of the plot makes the book a "keeper" in its own right, but what separates this book from the pack is its phenomenal examination of racial prejudice, the dangerous influence of fascism, and the Japanese perspective of World War II. ... My eyes keep getting wider and wider with respect to manga — weird, huh? — and I can only hope that we continue to see more translations of their better works. {*#1: A Tale of the Twentieth Century, #2: An Exile In Japan, #3: The Half-Aryan, #4: Days of Infamy*, & *#5: 1945 & All That Remains*: $21.95 ea. (Hardback) or $15.95 ea. (Soft Cover) + $6 S&H / Cadence Books • PO Box 77010 • San Francisco, CA 94107} Illo © Osamu Tezuka



6) The Desert Peach (S-25† / Donna Barr / AEON/MU Press / OP: Thoughts & Images [7/88]), and Stinz (*S-many* / Donna Barr / Fantagraphics & AEON [1989]). I really must apologize to Donna Barr for not having been intimately familiar with her work *years ago*. It's kind of an embarrassment when such a profound body of work escapes someone who's supposed to be "on top of things." But that's life, I guess. And I can (at least) console myself with the fact that I'm familiar with it now. ... *The Desert Peach* details the life of Pfirsich Rommel, the gay brother of General Rommel (The Desert *Fox*), as he commands his own small World War II regiment. And *Stinz* follows the life of a centaur (i.e., half-horse), from his days in the pre-World War I German Army to his retirement and raising a family. ... Donna's flawless knowledge of military protocol, the historical settings around both of the "great" wars, German culture, and, strangely enough, her profound insight into the soul of men (no matter how hard "we" — as men — try to deny its existence) really make *The Desert Peach* and *Stinz* true masterpieces of the medium. Donna's three years in the military certainly taught her a lot. And I can only presume that as a woman in "this man's Army," it was her "outsider" perspective that has enabled her to portray the hearts and minds of her own two "outsiders," Pfirsich Rommel and Stinz Löwhard, so believably. ... I doubt that any other book out there does a better job of exploring the intellectual and psychological nuances of human nature. {Donna's comics are too numerous to list here. Send for catalogs from: Donna Barr • 1318 N. Montgomery • Bremerton, WA 98312-3056 & AEON/MU Press • 5014-D Roosevelt Way NE • Seattle, WA 98105 / (206) 525-0632} Illo © Donna Barr

5) Heart Throbs (CGN / Max Cabanes / NBM/Catalan [3/91]). These semi-autobiographical stories of the awakening of sexual desire are some of the most moving and beautiful I've ever seen. Max Cabanes' poetic use of language makes me, as a fledgling writer, only shake my head in despair (I'll never be that eloquent). His artistic vision, which so perfectly captures the fear and exhilaration that we experience when first pursuing those "tender forbidden things," can only be marveled at as well. ... The graphic novel contains five stories: a boy's first time, first glimpse, first embarrassing moment, first passing crush, and first understanding of "the gift" than some "sylvios" possess. ... A joyous celebration of a boy's rite of passage. {$15.95 + $2 S&H / NBM • 185 Madison Ave., Suite 1504 • New York, NY 10016 / 1-800-886-1223}

HERE YOU GO.
WOW, THANKS! CAN I KEEP THIS?
OH, SURE! THEY END UP BEING FREEBIES MOST OF THE TIME ANYWAY.
STAROS REPORT 1997
SO WHICH BOOKS SHOULD I READ FIRST? I MEAN, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE RECOMMENDED A COUPLE HUNDRED COMICS IN HERE AT LEAST!
WELL, THEY ARE RANK ORDERED, SO YOU COULD ALWAYS START AT THE TOP OF THE LIST.
STAROS REPORT 1997

4) Tangents (CGN / Miguelanxo Prado / ComicsLit/NBM [1996]). Simply put, Prado is a genius! ... *Tangents* contains eight independent, yet thematically related stones that examine the conflict between ambition and romance. And apart from being mesmerized by Prado's unbelievable artwork, I was also swept away by his unique insight into the human condition. ... As the "autumn" images of this book linger in your mind, you can't help but reflect on your own past relationships. Any regrets? Who's to say. But the forks in the road will definitely be clearer from reading this book. ... Another incredible (and thankfully, translated) work from the creator of *Streak of Chalk*. {$16.95 + $2 S&H / NBM • 185 Madison Ave, Suite 1504 • New York, NY 10016 / 1-800-886-1223} Illo © Miguelanxo Prado

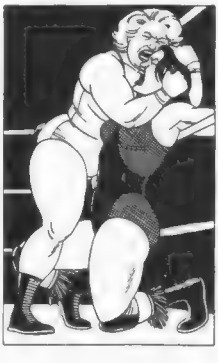
3) Lost Girls (LS-2 / Alan Moore (W) & Melinda Gebbie (I) / Kitchen Sink Press [11/95] // OP: *Taboo* #5 [1991]). With *Lost Girls*, Alan Moore has cast his line in yet another new direction. This time he's gone off and created — God forbid! — an *intelligent*, erotic comic book (one in which *all* the nerve endings tingle at the same time). ... It's the story of three seemingly normal women whose lives intersect in an affluent hotel. And although Alan puts a different spin on it, the story's central and fascinating concept (that of Alice, Wendy, and Dottie being the characters from *Alice In Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, and *The Wizard of Oz*) ends up being a brilliant way to explore the fantasy in all of us, and how our personalities are often shaped by our sexual natures. ... The series is done in full color, and Gebbie's vibrant artwork is perfect for the story. *For Mature Readers*. {$4.95 ea. + $6.50 S&H / Kitchen Sink Press • 320 Riverside Drive • Northampton, MA 01060 / 1-800-365-7465} Illo © Melinda Gebbie & Alan Moore

4/3 SECONDS LATER, 1600 FEET OVER HIROSHIMA, THE ATOMIC BOMB NAMED "THIN BOY" EXPLODED WITH A WHITE-HOT LIGHT—
IT WAS AS IF A MILLION FLASHBULBS HAD GONE OFF AT ONCE...
FLASH

2) Barefoot Gen (4-CGN / Keiji Nakazawa / New Society Publishers [1987] / OP: *Shukan Shonen Jampu* [Japan 1972-1975]). One of the most profound graphic novels of all time. ... As the Japanese equivalent of *Maus*, *Barefoot Gen* details the horrific effects that the atomic bomb had on Hiroshima. But since the mushroom cloud doesn't even appear until page 250, it's obvious that the story is about much more than just the bomb. ... Keiji Nakazawa was six years old when the bomb killed his father, sister, and younger brother; leaving him and his mother (along with two other brothers who were away at the time) the difficult task of surviving the catastrophe. And as we are led up to that tragic event, the series takes an intimate look at Keiji's family life, and profoundly examines his father's anti-war sentiments (that led to the family being ostracized long before the war was lost), Keiji's own indictment of Japan's expansionist war efforts, and the whiplash effect that government propaganda had on the society at large. ... An all-ages book that imparts a strong message about the ultimate tragedy of war. A "must read" for everyone. {Book 1: *A Cartoon History of Hiroshima* ($10.95), Book 2: *The Day After* ($9.95), Book 3: *Life After The Bomb* ($9.95), & Book 4: *Out of the Ashes* ($12.95) + 10% S&H / EduComics • PO Box 45831 • Seattle, WA 98145-0831} Illo © Keiji Nakazawa

DUH!
HEY... BUT IF YOU COULD SPARE ANOTHER HALF-HOUR OR SO, I COULD EVEN SHOW YOU A COUPLE OF MY FAVES RIGHT NOW.
YEAH, SURE. I'VE GOT THE TIME TO CHECK OUT SOME OF THESE BOOKS YOU'VE BEEN PUSHING SO HARD.
GREAT! THEN JUST SIT RIGHT DOWN, MY FRIEND, AND LET ME SERVE 'EM RIGHT UP.

1) "The New *Love & Rockets* Spin-Offs" including: Girl Crazy (3-MS / Gilbert "Beto" Hernandez / Dark Horse [5/96]), New Love (6-MS / Gilbert / Fantagraphics [7/96]), Whoa, Nellie! (3-MS / Jaime Hernandez / Fantagraphics [7/96]), and the Maggie & Hopey Color Fun (OS / Jaime / Fantagraphics [5/97]); as well as two upcoming series from Fantagraphics (that I can't wait to see): Luba (by Gilbert) and Penny Century (by Jaime). Los Bros. Hernandez didn't waste any time launching their new titles after the conclusion of *Love & Rockets*. With a perfect balance of experimentation and continuity, there's something fresh and yet familiar here for all of us. Of course, it goes without saying that Jaime's work is some of the most beautiful in the business. It's accessible and endearing, without any compromise of human spirit or intelligence. — Who else can make you literally fall in love with his (or her) characters!? — But if you don't mind, I'd like to concentrate on Beto's *Girl Crazy* for a moment, as it really illustrates a point I've been wanting to make for quite some time. Simply stated, it's amazing how much prior knowledge it takes to *really* understand certain comic books! Case in point: On the surface, *Girl Crazy* seems like a lighthearted, surreal tale of three sixteen-year-old sisters who try to rescue another from prison. Yet underneath, it's a well-concealed and much-sharper story about the suppressed dreams within us, and how we often sacrifice our true potential to conform to the "norms" of a society. ... This series is a perfect example of how subtly complicated the medium has become; both in its narrative form, as well as in its experimentation with historical conventions. And because *Girl Crazy* operates at such an abstract level, unless you're a very seasoned reader, you'd never understand the complexity of Beto's ideas or the success with which he accomplishes them. ... Of course, you might say to yourself, "It can't be that hard to read a stupid comic book!" And, on one level, you'd be right. Most comics — as well as many *Love & Rockets* comics — aren't that hard to read at all ... But there is a level of experience one needs to really understand the more challenging works in the medium ... Take mathematics, for instance. If all you know is how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide, and someone gives you two really complicated physics equations — one totally bunk, and the other which would change the world as we know it — would you be able to appreciate the difference? .. I don't think so. ... In a lot of ways the same premise applies to many of today's comics. Until you've spent some time in the field (or "club," if you will), you might not be able to appreciate the difference between two apparently "weird" comics; one of which was brilliant and the other just a piece of ... well, you know. ... And aside from the ever-present "superhero stigma" that stagnates public perception of the medium, this is probably another reason why it's so hard to get an outsider to appreciate the finer points of comics; they just don't have the experience needed to fully understand them. ... To that end, be careful what you put into the hands of a new reader, as they're likely to become disinterested (not to mention, embarrassed) if they don't "get it" right away. And although many *Love & Rockets* stories are perfect for newcomers, make sure you get them up to speed before you hit them with the heavy stuff. 'Cause whenever you read "*A Love & Rockets Comic Book*," you're gazing upon the pinnacle of what this medium has to offer. {Catalog @ Fantagraphics • 7563 Lake City Way NE • Seattle, WA 98115 / 1-800-657-1100 // *Girl Crazy*. $2.95 ea. + $4 S&H / Dark Horse • 10956 SE Main St. • Milwaukie, OR 97222 / 1-800-862-0052} Illo(s) © Gilbert Hernandez & Jaime Hernandez



WELL, THE FIRST IS AN ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT PLAY ON GREEK MYTHOLOGY AND REAL LIFE, THE SECOND IS THE MOST INTRIGUING BRITISH MYSTERY I'VE EVER READ, AND THE THIRD IS A FANTASTIC PARODY OF MANKIND ITSELF.
BESIDES, I ALSO HAPPEN TO REP THESE BOOKS IN THE STATES.
BACCHUS/ALEC
STRANGEHAVEN
DRAGMOP

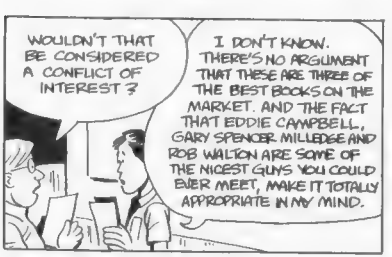
The Following Comics Are Represented By (& Available Thru) The StarHouse

Dee Vee (S-2 / anthology / edited by Marcus Moore & Daren White / Production Designs by Michael Evans / Dee Vee Press [1997]) This brand new anthology from "down under" not only spotlights Eddie Campbell's newest *Alec MacGarry* project — his first major *Alec* serialization in years! — but it also showcases a host of talent not usually featured in stateside anthologies. Pick it up and check out Fil Barlow's *Zooniverse*, Ralph Kidson's twisted views, and Pete Mullins' absolutely stunning artwork! ... Isn't it time you got just a little deviant? {$3.50 ea. ppd / Chris Staros • PO Box 1282 • Marietta, GA 30061-1282 // Correspondence: Dee Vee Press • PO Box 230 • Paddington • Brisbane, Q. 4064 • Australia}

Ragmop (S-10 / Rob Walton / Planet Lucy Press [1995]). In *Ragmop*, dinosaurs, fallen angels, misogynistic psychiatrists, corrupt politicians, astronomers, and the pope — the most bizarre host of characters ever assembled in comics! — all vie for the elusive "O-ring" in a mad attempt to control the universe . . Rob Walton is as insightful as he is dead-on funny, and his frolicking adventure, which parodies mankind itself, leaves nothing sacred except for maybe one's own imagination ... Jump on board this rocket ship before it's too late. It may be your only hope of ever getting off this absurd planet. {$3.50 ea. ppd / Chris Staros • PO Box 1282 • Marietta, GA 30061-1282 // Correspondence: Rob Walton • Planet Lucy Press • 49 Roseheath Ave • Toronto, Ontario M4C 3P4 • Canada} Illo © Rob Walton

Strangehaven (S-6 / Gary Spencer Millidge / Abiogenesis Press [6/95]) *Strangehaven* is not only the best new series to come out since *Stray Bullets*, it also happens to be produced by one of the nicest guys you could ever meet. I'm honored to be associated with this fine book, and if you haven't tried it yet, you need to. ... It's about a young man who gets stranded in the small British town of Strangehaven. And even though everything seems normal at the outset, it slowly becomes apparent that all is not well with the town's inhabitants or their motivations. . . It's no wonder that Gary has quickly gained critical acclaim for his innovative art style, great character development, and his ability to weave a classically intriguing British mystery. {In the USA & Canada: $3.50 ea. ppd / Sub:6:$20 / Chris Staros • PO Box 1282 • Marietta, GA 30061-1282 / In the UK & Europe: £2.20 ea. ppd / Sub:6:£12.00 / Gary Spencer Millidge • Abiogenesis Press • PO Box 448 • Southend-On-Sea • Essex SS1 2FN • England} Illo © Gary Spencer Millidge

Eddie Campbell's Bacchus and "Alec MacGarry Continuity" (*Bacchus*: S-25† / Eddie Campbell (with Pete Mullins) / Eddie Campbell Comics [5/95] / OP: See *The Staros Report-1996* for a complete bibliography of Eddie Campbell's *Bacchus* & *Alec* publications) Though Eddie Campbell has published many kinds of stories, the bulk of his work centers around two continuities: *Alec MacGarry* and *Bacchus* (a.k.a. *Deadface*). *Alec* is a brilliant and insightful romp through Eddie's life, representing one of the best — and first! — works in the autobiographical-comics genre. In it, we witness Eddie's progression from "beer to wine," or to put it more accurately, his inevitable maturation through time. Whether it's tales of his early pub-crawlin' days, or glimpses into his current private life with "wifey" and kids, there are "truths" here that transcend the factual and paint a picture of the way life *should* be. ... *Bacchus*, on the other hand, is a wild and hilarious mythological adventure imbued with unparalleled social and political insight. It's a story of a few Greek gods who have somehow managed to survive the last four millennia. And even though they're the "wisest" and most powerful beings on Earth, they can't seem to rise above the whirlwind of petty grudges and skirmishes that bind them. Though one often gets in trouble when saying things like this, I'd like to go on record as stating the following: "*Bacchus* is the *ultimate* comic book!" Why? Because, by some creative miracle, it possesses every possible quality one could hope for: a unique and engaging art style; a brilliantly crafted and intriguing story, completely believable and captivating characters, an undercurrent of humor, sarcasm, and irony, a thought-provoking subtext full of social and political realism; a well researched examination of history; and, yes — I'll admit it! — *superheroes*. In it's own weird way, *Bacchus* is actually a revisionist-superhero tale told in epic Greek proportions . . If you're not buying *Eddie Campbell's Bacchus*, I'm not talking to you anymore! *[INSERT RASPBERRY HERE]* {Catalog: Chris Staros • PO Box 1282 • Marietta, GA 30061-1282 / FAX (770) 427-6395 // Correspondence: Eddie Campbell • PO Box 230 • Paddington • Brisbane, Q. 4064 • Australia}


WOULDN'T THAT BE CONSIDERED A CONFLICT OF INTEREST?
I DON'T KNOW. THERE'S NO ARGUMENT THAT THESE ARE THREE OF THE BEST BOOKS ON THE MARKET. AND THE FACT THAT EDDIE CAMPBELL, GARY SPENCER MILLEDGE AND ROB WALTON ARE SOME OF THE NICEST GUYS YOU COULD EVER MEET, MAKE IT TOTALLY APPROPRIATE IN MY MIND.

The following are three all-new *Alec MacGarry*, *Strangehaven*, and *Ragmop* stories courtesy of (and © 199?) Eddie Campbell, Gary Spencer Millidge, and Rob Walton (respectively). Thanks, guys! You have no idea how much I admire your work or appreciate our friendship. All the best to you, mates.

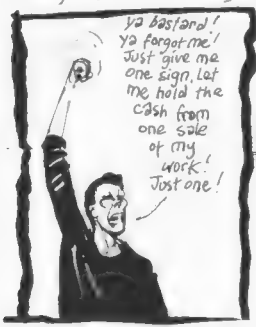
This is the latest part of a work-in-progress concerning Alec MacGeary. Anyone interested in making a living from their art will find much to inform and amuse, as will anyone happy to watch from the sidelines -

Eddie Campbell

The resolve to be, to the exclusion of all else, an artist, will be a difficult one to maintain

You will have immediately gone into free-fall, with the ground rushing up at an alarming speed

You may find that you start to lose patience with the bargain you made with FATE



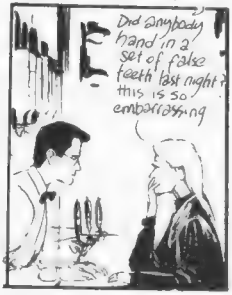
This will be your second lapse of faith, Alec MacGeary

Then Annie's unscheduled return to Australia will have precipitated an hour of crisis.

You can't pay the rent on your own so you'll call the landlord and try to wrap it up without pain.

You'll go up north to Blackpool and live with your parents again after all this time

You'll get a job in a seafront nightclub and save some money



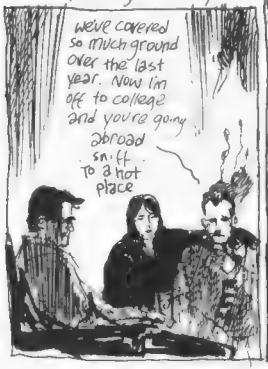
The Escape Summer issue will arrive late in the mail: 3-D section, spectacles and everything. Yourself, Elliott, Kane, Emerson, Hughes, Myra. The gangs all here. But your mind will be elsewhere.

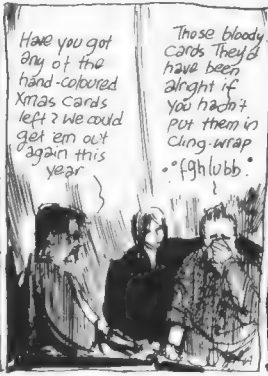
The night sky will be calling you across the sea.

I've never borrowed money from my father before

Eh? the £10 assisted passage that finished in the 'sixties I envision my Dad saying

You'll meet up with Ilya in a hilltop cottage in Derbyshire.

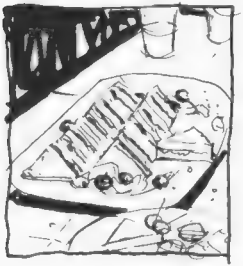



Have you got any of the hand-coloured Xmas cards left? We could get 'em out again this year
Those bloody cards They'd have been alright if you hadn't put them in cling-wrap
°fghlubb°

You'll be on your way to Australia, Alec MacGarry..

..But it will be a good idea to stop over in London for the first official meeting of *Escape* magazine, publishers and contributors

They will have hired an upstairs room at a pub

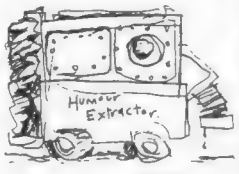


You and I would just go in the bar, Alec MacGarry, but factionalism will have already taken its hold.

They don't want every Tom, Dick and Harry getting mixed up in it.

A guy named Dakin's here.

He will be surprised that everyone will know his stuff. But that's how it is when your stuff's the right stuff. He'll pull his first photocopied comic out of a plastic bag



Portfolio Cases? Nobody here uses one. That must be another faction you're thinking of.

Dakin will have appeared in a crap glossy expensive comic called *pssst!* which will have had the man at the Crossroads for a sub-editorial gopher at the time when he first sent out his various communications

pssst! will have systematically rejected everything of value that came its way (except Dakin, curiously) including yourself. Almost too uncanny to be coincidental. Fate will have placed it there to test everybody's patience.

There will always be a *pssst!* though it may go by another name, in your own epoch, preaching the 'Art' of comics while squandering the potential of the market on its foolish inanities before collapsing under the weight of expensive folly

It will also have *pssed off* the hoary old pros at the *Society of Strip Illustrators* by inviting them to compete for the prize of designing the *pssst* logo, instead of hiring someone to do it, treating them like a mob of young hopefuls

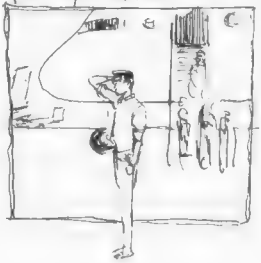
Naturally one of the hoary old pros will have rubbished the magazine in their own monthly SSI Journal.

The man at the Crossroads will have obtained for you a copy to peruse. There's a member in the correspondence columns beefing about coming all the way down from the Orkneys with his good lady wife for the annual dinner and some of the members haven't even bothered to hire tuxedos.

...offence to the dignity of his good lady and all that.

The SSI is an association of professionals. Acceptance to membership will require that the applicant have made a living from comics for one year. *Status Quo* is the new chairman. They meet upstairs at a pub.

From the other side of the planet you can't see it.



Even at night, Darwin airport will be a steam bath. It may cause you to consider how climate would influence national temperament, or it may not.

At Townsville Annie will meet you and ensconce you in the Travelodge for the afternoon.

(It will have been six months after all)

Then in Ingham you will meet her charge, the motherless child.

And there will be many beers at the house on the beach under the tropical sun with your future father-in-law and his remarkable fund of anecdotes

And there will be islands with nobody on them.

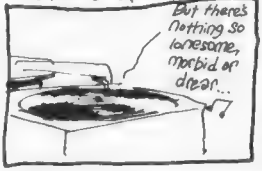
Can you be an artist not connected with any 'Art World'? Can you be one if nobody ever knows it?

Here's one of those anecdotes:

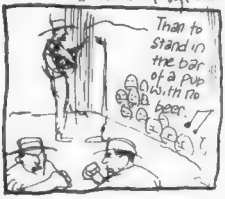
Among several poems by one Dan Sheahan, sugar cane farmer, published in the *North Queensland Register* was, in 1914, one titled *The Pub Without Beer*

In 1957, one Gordon Parsons, timber man and country singer, comes upon the basis of the poem aurally, and, believing it to be public domain 'folk' material, sets about constructing it into a workable song.

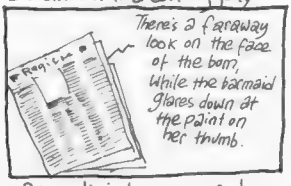
That year it is recorded by his mate Slim Dusty when he's a song short of his quota at a session. It becomes a million seller, his first hit, and a big surprise to himself. It does well in Britain too but probably remains unheard in America, being a song about alcohol.



The story goes that Sheahan's boys took the matter up with Dusty when he toured through Ingham. For half an hour the story is a cause celebre in musical circles and for slightly longer than that in the town of Ingham



Plagiarism? Artists adapt stuff all the time. It's just a bit embarrassing if it becomes a runaway hit. (It didn't seem to matter to anyone that the tune Parsons set the poem to was essentially *Beautiful Dreamer* with a country git)



So send out your messages in bottles, one and all. Who knows what may come of it? *Caveat emptor.*

Right at this time, however, you will be working on the problem of raising a mere hundred. You'll have enough to get you through the three months but it'd be nice to have a bit more.

Years previously you will have painted some designs on some leather jackets for five quid a pop.

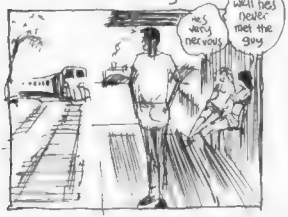
But that's just copping a feel in comparison to the triomphal loss of virginity that will accompany the sale of your first story

or strip, as Elliott calls them.

Alec, Can you do us another strip?

By now your 'virginity' will weigh heavily upon your soul, and here is how you will set about losing it: ...

The British Comics "Small Press thing" will be starting to make international connections. There are some guys in Canada doing their own thing and a girl in Tokyo. Elliott will have sold some sticker designs to Fiorucci in Italy



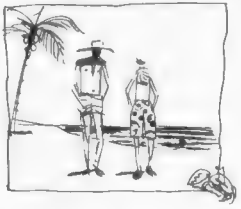
An Australian guy, Beardy Bentley of Melbourne, will have been in London, heard the word and taken it back with him.

He will have been corresponding with you for a year now. You'll call him up North.

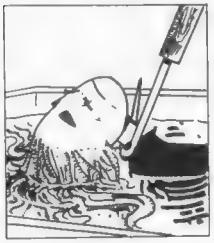
You're a guest here, so he'll be a guest of a guest. You will watch, with amazement at his adeptness, his dismantlement of a quiche into its encyclopedic components.

He'll be one of a team putting out a comics mag called WKSPOTS which, if truth be told, will be nearer the pssst model than any other.

You'll put it to him that in his, uh editorial capacity, he might like to patronise a worthy artist to the tune of one hundred frogskins.



...and take away with him the originals of 7 four-pagers You'll have been busy drawing about 'The Pyjama Girl', an infamous Australian murder.

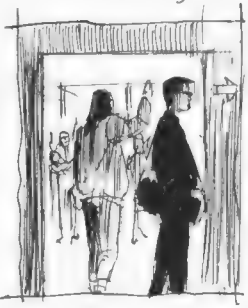


And there you'll do the deal. You'll make your first ever sale. On a tropical beach.

Full of yourself, you will then drink too many beers and put your head through the fluorescent tube in the garage.

With the taste of impending celebrity in your saliva you'll be eager to get back to London.

It'll be the pull of gravity.



Annie will cry though she leaves the baby in competent hands.

You'll propose marriage at Darwin airport

In London you'll drop in on the Escape boys and have Showers. Dakin will be visiting

You'll confess to him that you feel you shouldn't have been away from the hub of things for so long

That remarkable thought will splash through your brain.

what a deliciously egocentric notion.

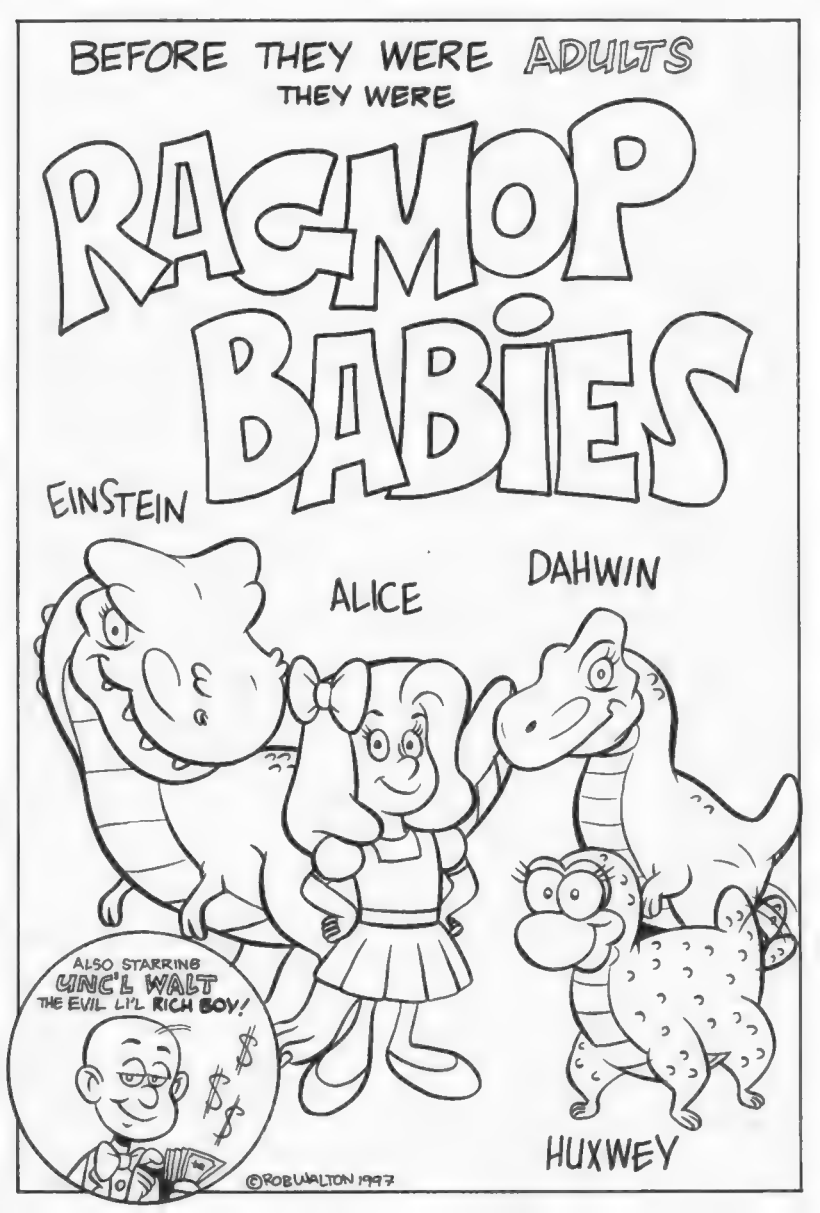
The most interesting place is where you are

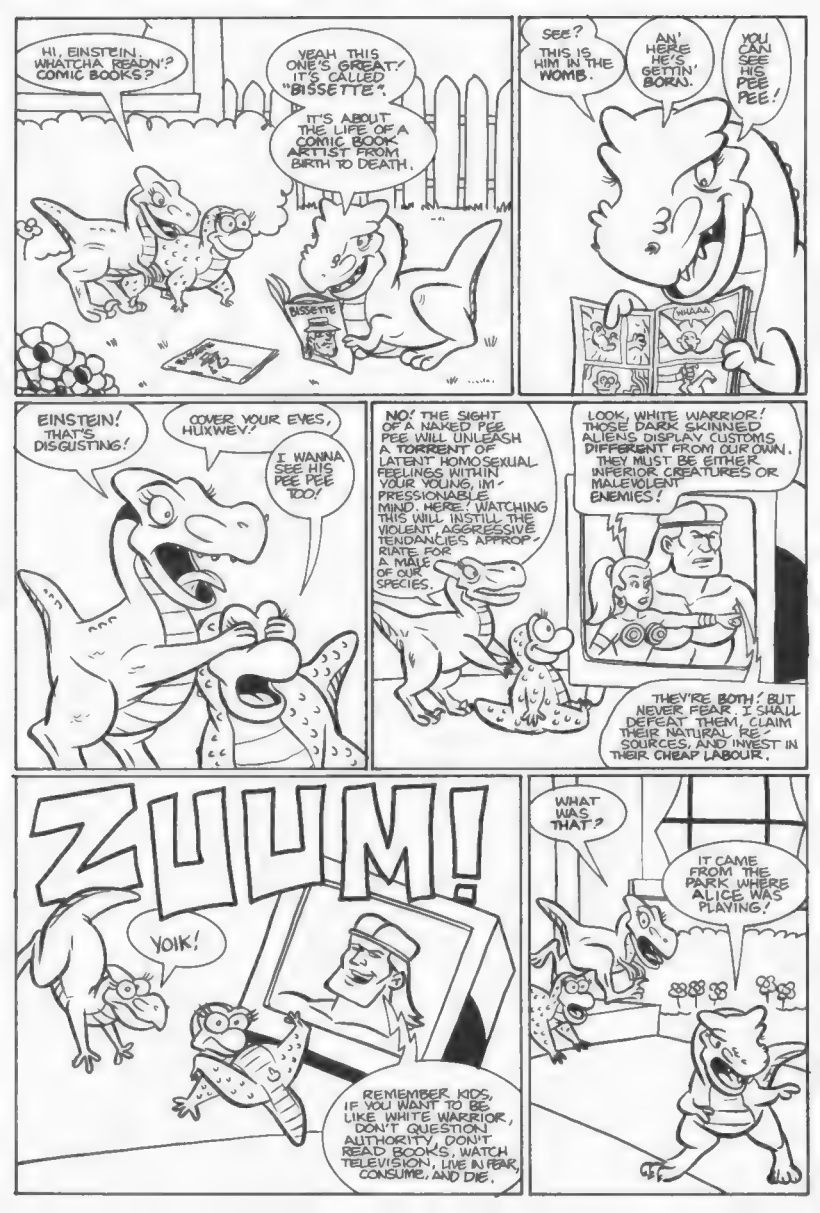
RIBIT
RIBIT
STRANGEHAVEN · monkey
© MATT BARRY SPENCER MILLIDGE
"Senugeath, Agla, Vulnavii, Lhavala, come, Omot and rulers of fire."
RIBIT
"Calnuso, Tely, Pleorim, Bedor, grant me all to which I desire."
ARE YOU SURE HE'S COMING?
YEAH, HE'LL TURN UP . BUT, YOU KNOW BOBBY
HAVE YOU GOT ANYTHING FOR MUM YET?
NOT REALLY. I MIGHT GET HER SOME FLOWERS. HAVE YOU?
NAAH. BLOWN ALL MY POCKET MONEY ALREADY!
WHAT ON?
COMICS, FAGS AND DRUGS I EXPECT
QUIET BOBBY! IF MUM AND PAPA HEAR YOU, WE'LL ALL BE IN BIG TROUBLE
"Is there something you're not telling me? Where did that monkey come from?"
DO YOU FANCY A CUPPA?
"um . . . you invited her."
MMM.
I'LL GO AND MAKE ONE THEN, SHALL I?
MMM.
GRAZIE.
"What?"
"Darren, that's not a monkey."

IF WE GET GROUNDED AGAIN, 'CAUSE OF YOU, I'LL...
SHUT UP GINA
HEY, DID YOU MANAGE TO GET THE THING?
OF COURSE.
I SAID I WOULD, DIDN'T I?
COOL!
WHERE'S THE BOOK?
I HID IT UNDER THE BED...
THAT'S STEALING BOBBY!
SO?
"That loveable little creature is Miss Vanita."
HA HA
"You - You're joking."
"No."
"You took a live client and turned her into a monkey?"
"No."
"You are joking?"
"No."
WHY CAN'T SAMANTHA JUST A TURN HER BACK INTO A HUMAN?
"You're trying to drive me out of my mind?"
"I - I - I - I mean that – um – that is Miss Vanita But I didn't do it Sirena did it."
"Our words have strength, the victory is won."
"so say us all, this spell is done."
IS THAT IT?
mmmmmm
SHH!
mmmmmm
LOOK! IT'S GLOWING!
WOW, YEAH! IT IS! IT IS!
I TOLD YOU WE SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE IT! I TOLD YOU!

"Powers of love, powers of hate, give me the key to unlock the gate."
"Aglon, Tetragram, Astaroth, Dumaso..."
"...te adoro, et te invoco."
WOW! IT'S FLOATING IN MID-AIR!
JEEZ! IT'S COMING TOWARDS ME!
WHAT'S THAT NOISE?
BANG!
AAAAK!
-RIBIT-
WHAT ON EARTH WAS THAT?
MAMMA MIA! BLOODY KIDS!
"You'll what?"
I'M-A GOIN' TO KILL-A THEM ONE OF-A THESE DAYS.
"Change her back! And then get out of my life forever!"
RING! RING!
AND-A NOW THE BLOODY TELEPHONE!
I'LL GET IT.
RING RING
IF I TELL-A THEM ONCE, I TELL-A THEM A THOUSAN' TIMES.

HA HA HA! EXCELLENT! IT WORKED!
SHH, MARCO! SOMEONE'S COMING!
WHAT'S ALL-A DA NOISE, EH?
YOUR MAMA AND ME ARE-A TRYIN' TO WATCH-A TV, OKAY?
SI, PAPA, SCUSI.
SCUSI.
I WON'T TELL-A YOU AGAIN. NOW YOU CAN GET-A READY FOR BED, OKAY?
SI, PAPA.
GINA, WHAT'RE WE GONNA DO?
LOOK, THE THINGY IS STILL HERE.
BUT WHAT ABOUT BOBBY?
WE JUST GOT TO FIND OUT HOW TO REVERSE THE SPELL.
DO YOU THINK HE'LL BE ALRIGHT?
YEAH, 'COURSE HE WILL.
RIBIT
HELLO, VICKI?
HI. ER... THIS MAY SEEM LIKE AN ODD QUESTION, BUT HAVE YOU BEEN... PRACTISING TONIGHT?
NO, NOT TONIGHT WE'VE JUST BEEN WATCHING TELEVISION.
WHY DO YOU ASK?
WELL, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS ONE


BEFORE THEY WERE ADULTS
THEY WERE
RAGMOP BABIES
EINSTEIN
ALICE
DAHWIN
HUXWEY
ALSO STARRING
UNC'L WALT
THE EVIL LI'L RICH BOY!
©ROB WALTON 1997


HI, EINSTEIN. WHATCHA READN'? COMIC BOOKS?
YEAH THIS ONE'S GREAT! IT'S CALLED "BISSETTE".
IT'S ABOUT THE LIFE OF A COMIC BOOK ARTIST FROM BIRTH TO DEATH.
BISSETTE
SEE? THIS IS HIM IN THE WOMB.
AN' HERE HE'S GETTIN' BORN.
YOU CAN SEE HIS PEE PEE!
HUUAAA
EINSTEIN! THAT'S DISGUSTING!
COVER YOUR EYES, HUXWEV!
I WANNA SEE HIS PEE PEE TOO!
NO! THE SIGHT OF A NAKED PEE PEE WILL UNLEASH A TORRENT OF LATENT HOMOSEXUAL FEELINGS WITHIN YOUNG, IMPRESSIONABLE MIND, HERE! WATCHING THIS WILL INSTILL THE VIOLENT AGGRESSIVE TENDANCIES APPROPRIATE FOR A MALE OF OUR SPECIES.
LOOK, WHITE WARRIOR! THOSE DARK SKINNED ALIENS DISPLAY CUSTOMS DIFFERENT FROM OUR OWN. THEY MUST BE EITHER INFERIOR CREATURES OR MALEVOLENT ENEMIES!
THEY'RE BOTH! BUT NEVER FEAR. I SHALL DEFEAT THEM, CLAIM THEIR NATURAL RESOURCES, AND INVEST IN THEIR CHEAP LABOUR.
ZUUM!
YOIK!
REMEMBER KIDS, IF YOU WANT TO BE LIKE WHITE WARRIOR, DON'T QUESTION AUTHORITY, DON'T READ BOOKS, WATCH TELEVISION, LIVE IN FEAR, CONSUME, AND DIE.
WHAT WAS THAT?
IT CAME FROM THE PARK WHERE ALICE WAS PLAYING!

LIL' ATOM SMASHER
IS EVERYTHING OKAY, ALICE?
HI, GUYS! YOU'RE JUST IN TIME FOR MY EXPERIMENT!!
I'VE FINALLY FOUND A USE FOR MY "SUZY HOMEMAKER OVEN."
USING A SMALL AMOUNT OF SODIUM-22 AND TWENTY-TWO MILES OF COPPER WIRE, I'VE CONVERTED MY OVEN INTO A BATATRON.
LIL ATOM SMASHER
COPPER WIRE
SUZY HOMEMAKER OVEN
THE SODIUM-22 EMITS POSITRONS, THE ANTI-MATTER COUNTERPART OF ELECTRONS. BY BOOSTING THE ELECTRONS TO 2.3 MILLION-ELECTRON-VOLTS, I CAN PRODUCE A MAGNETIC FIELD TWENTY THOUSAND TIMES MORE POWERFUL THAN THE EARTH'S MAGNETIC FIELD.
THE OVEN ACTS AS A CLOUD CHAMBER. WHEN THE MATTER AND ANTI-MATTER COLLIDE, MY COMPUTER CAN TRACK THE SUB-ATOMIC PARTICLES... SEE?
BEST OF ALL, THE HEAT RELEASED FROM THE SPLITTING ATOMS BAKED MY CUP CAKES TO PERFECTION!

HEY, GANG, WHAT'S UP?
OH. HELLO UNC'L WALT.
HMPH!
YOU CAN TELL HE'S EVIL BECAUSE HE'S THE ONLY ONE WITHOUT EYE LASHES.
I BET HE'S NOT EVEN A REAL UNCLE.
AU CONTRAIRE! MY OLDER BROTHER IS MARRIED WITH A SON.
NOT ONLY DOES THAT MAKE ME TH' KID'S UNCLE, IT MAKES ME HIS RICH UNCLE.
SAY! AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE BABY-SITTING YOUR NEPHEW RIGHT NOW?
I AM, SEE! I SUB-CONTRACTED THE WORK TO LI'L JUANITA FROM GHETTOTOWN.
MY BROTHER PAYS ME ONE HUNDRED BUCKS A DAY TO LOOK AFTER HIS KID. I CONTRACT THE WORK OUT TO JUANITA FOR THIRTY-TWO CENTS AN HOUR.
AND THANKS TO TRANSFER PRICING, I CAN ASSIGN MY PROFIT TO MY SUB-SIDIARY IN JUANITA'S HOME COUNTRY OF PUERTO RICO.
NOT ONLY DON'T I PAY TAXES ON MY MONEY, I GET AN ADDITIONAL TAX CREDIT BY CLAIMING MY PAY-ROLL EXPENSES IN THE U.S.A.!
NOW THAT'S DEMOCRACY!
BE QUIET CONSUME AND DIE

HEY, CHRIS,... THANKS, MAN. THOSE WERE FRIGGIN' FANTASTIC!
NO PROBLEM. ...BELIEVE ME, IT WAS MY PLEASURE. LIKE I SAID BEFORE, COMICS ARE MY FAVORITE SUBJECT.
SO, LIKE, DO THESE GUYS MAKE A LOT OF MONEY AND STUFF?
UH-HA! I WISH THEY DID! ...THAT'S ONE OF THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS WITH THE INDUSTRY THESE DAYS.
IT'S NOT VERY BIG TO BEGIN WITH, YOU KNOW. AND WITH SO MUCH EXCELLENT MATERIAL OUT THERE RIGHT NOW, THE "PIE" JUST KEEPS GETTING CUT INTO SMALLER AND SMALLER PIECES.
I GUESS THAT'S WHY I PUT THIS EXHIBIT TOGETHER IN THE FIRST PLACE. TO TRY AND GET THE WORD OUT TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC-- HELP MAKE THE "PIE" A LITTLE BIGGER.
WELL, IF YOU MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS ONE PERSON AT A TIME, YOU SHOULD FEEL A TAD BETTER.
WHY'S THAT?
'CAUSE I'M GONNA GO AHEAD AND ORDER A FEW OF THESE WHEN I GET HOME.
REALLY!? THAT'S FANTASTIC. ...JUST BE CAREFUL, THOUGH, THIS STUFF CAN GET ADDICTIVE.
I'LL CONSIDER THAT FAIR WARNING.
WELL, CHRIS, I GUESS I BETTER BE GOING. THANKS SO MUCH FOR THE PERSONAL TOUR TODAY.
HEY. IT WAS MY PLEASURE.
YOU TAKE CARE NOW.
HEY, I'LL DROP YOU A LINE ONCE I'VE CHECKED OUT SOME OF THESE TITLES. LET YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK.
PLEASE DO. I ALWAYS WRITE BACK.
THE END

Parting Remarks

Well, that's the whole list (whew!). Though you may not have agreed with all the entries or rankings, I hope that you found at least *one* new title to pursue. *And*, if you can't find these titles at your local retailer, then order them directly from the publishers. I've listed enough information with each entry so that you can drop a check in the mail (or call them) today! In any event, *write* to these publishers, *get* one of their catalogs, and *support* them by purchasing their products. They are the catalysts for change, and the promoters of ground-breaking ideas in comics. Also, if you want to recommend something to me that I have (surely) missed, you can write to me at THE STAROS REPORT, PO BOX 1282, MARIETTA, GA 30061-1282. It's always nice to make new friends thru comics.

P.S. — And not to ignore the books that I discovered too late (and/or just didn't have enough room for), you might also want to check out the following excellent titles: *Yikes!*, *Lust For Life*, *The Cartoon History of the Universe*, *Sheba*, help ... *A Jew In Communist Prague*, *Spud*, *Spectacles*, . someone help me, please .. *Innocent Bystander*, *The Copybook Tales*, *The King of Persia*, *Rollercoaster*, I just can't stop reading these damn things ... *I Can't Tell You Anything*, *I Had A Dream*, *Portrait of a Young Man as a Cartoonist*, *Caffeine*, ... I think I'm about to lose my .. *Concave Up*, *Boom Boom*, *Keyhole*, *Definition*, .. aaaaarrrrggghh!!!

THE "ALL-UP" 1996/1997 GUIDE TO THE BEST COMICS IN THE INDUSTRY

A.K.A. "CHRIS' SUPER-HANDY, RIP-IT-OUT, TAKE-IT-WITH-YOU, BUY-THESE-BOOKS LIST!"

And remember, *all* the books on the list are worth reading. It's not a *Top 200* out of 200, it's a *Top 200* out of *thousands*!

NOTES.
- The comics I represent are listed separately (to keep me honest). But they're also listed *first* because they're *that good*!!!
- An astensk (*) indicates a new addition reviewed this issue.
- A triple astensk (***) indicates a new addition *not* reviewed (as the body of work was sufficiently reviewed last issue)
- All non-astensked titles were reviewed in *The Staros Report - 1996* — That's why you need that issue as well!
- Titles in quotes (" ") indicate that this is the title I chose to call the *grouping*.
- Magazine titles marked with a question mark ("?") — I think — have been discontinued.

The Best Comics & Graphic Novels:

- ♦ *Eddie Campbell's Bacchus & Alec* by Eddie Campbell
- ♦ *Strangebat en** by Gary Spencer Millidge
- ♦ *Ragmop** by Rob Walton
- ♦ *Dee Vee** edited by Marcus Moore & Daren White
- ♦ *The Staros Report* by — well, you know!

1) *From Hell* by Alan Moore & Eddie Campbell
2) *Love & Rockets, Birdland, Girl Crazy**, *New Love**, *Whoa, Nellie!**, *Maggie & Hopey*, *Color Special**, *Luba**, & *Penny Century** by Gilbert & Jaime Hernandez
3) *Maus: A Survivor's Tale - Vols I & II* by Artie Spiegelman
4) *V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore & David Lloyd
5) *The Sandman, Death: The High Cost of Living*, & *Death: The Time of Your Life**** by Neil Gaiman & various artists
6) *Cerebus* by Dave Sim & Gerhard
7) *Eightball* & *Lloyd Llewellyn* by Daniel Clowes
8) *Signal To Noise, Violent Cases*, & *The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Mr. Punch* by Gaiman & McKean
9) *Miracleman* by Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman & various artists
10) *Barefoot Gen** by Keiji Nakazawa
11) *Understanding Comics* by Scott McCloud
12) *Yummy Fur* by Chester Brown
13) *Pickle* by Dylan Horrocks
14) *Why I Hate Saturn* & *Cowboy Wally Show* by Kyle Baker
15) *Watchmen* by Alan Moore & Dave Gibbons
16) *The Maxamortal, BratPack*, & *The One* by Rick Veitch
17) *Saga of the Swamp Thing ("The Alan Moore issues")* by Alan Moore, Bissette, Totleben, & Veitch
18) *The Dark Knight Returns* by Frank Miller
19) *The Minotaur's Tale* & *The Spiral Cage* by Al Davidson
20) *The Boulevard of Broken Dreams, The Mishkin File!*, & *Waldo World!* by Kim Deitch & Simon Deitch
21) *A Contract With God, A Life Force, To The Heart of the Storm, Dropsie Avenue: The Neighborhood*, & *The Dreamer* by Will Eisner
22) *Stuck Rubber Baby* by Howard Cruse
23) *Lost Girls** by Alan Moore & Melinda Gebbie
24) *Streak of Chalk & Tangents** by Miguelanxo Prado
25) *Heart Throbs** by Max Cabanes
26) *The Desert Peach** & *Stinz** by Donna Barr
27) *Paul Auster's City of Glass* by Paul Karasik & David Mazzucchelli
28) *Lone Wolf & Cub* by Kazuo Koike & Goseki Kojima
29) *Adolf** by Osamu Tezuka
30) *"The Works of Charles Burns"* including: *Hard-Boiled Defective Stories, Curse of the Moleman, Blood Club, Skin Deep*, & *Black Hole*
31) *Introducing Kafka** by Robert Crumb
32) *"The Works of Peter Kuper"* including *Wild Life, Bleeding Heart, The System**, & *Eye of the Beholder**
33) *The Acme Novelty Library* by Chris Ware
34) *"The Works of José Muñoz & Carlos Sampayo"* including: *Sinner**, *Joe's Bar**, & *Billie Holiday**
35) *"The Works of Paul Pope"* including *THB, The Ballad of Dr. Richardson, Sin Titulo*, & *Buzz Buzz Comics Magazine**
36) *Naughty Bits & Artistic Licentiousness* by Roberta Gregory
37) *Peep Show* & *The Cartoon Diary of Joe Matt* by Joe Matt
38) *Hepcats* by Martin Wagner
39) *Through The Habitrails* & *Jeff Nicholson's Small-Press Tirade* by Jeff Nicholson
40) *Jar of Fools & Berlin** by Jason Lutes
41) *Drawn & Quarterly* edited by Chris Oliveros
42) *Raw* edited by Art Spiegelman & Francois Mouly
43) *Taboo* edited by Stephen Bissette
44) *Warrior** edited by Dez Skinn
45) *Palestine* & *Yahoo* by Joe Sacco
46) *Hate & Neat Stuff* by Peter Bagge
47) *Akira* by Katsuhiro Otomo
48) *Low Life* by Ed Brubaker
49) *Stray Bullets* by David Lapham
50) *Sin City, SC: A Dame To Kill For, The Big Fat Kill, The Babe Wore Red*, & *That Yellow Bastard**** by Frank Miller
51) *The Crow* by J. O'Barr
52) *Marshal Law* by Pat Mills & Kevin O'Neill
53) *Tales of the Beanworld* by Larry Marder
54) *Too Much Coffee Man* by Shannon Wheeler
55) *The Cereal Killings* by James Sturm
56) *Tales From The Bog** by Marcus Lusk
57) *Confessions of a Cereal Eater!** by Rob Maisch, Bo & Scott Hampton, Rand Holmes, & Sandy Plunkett
58) *American Splendor* by Harvey Pekar & various artists
59) *The Complete Crumb Comics* by Robert Crumb
60) *Weirdo* edited by Robert Crumb, Peter Bagge, & Aline Kominsky-Crumb
61) *Julius Knipl: Real Estate Photographer** by Ben Katchor
62) *A Small Killing* by Alan Moore & Oscar Zarate
63) *David Chelsea In Love* by David Chelsea
64) *Slutburger & Fleener** by Mary Fleener
65) *Daddy's Girl** & *Nowhere** by Debbie Drechsler
66) *Enemy Ace: War Idyll* by George Pratt
67) *M* by Jon J. Muth
68) *The Upturned Stone* by Scott Hampton
69) *Palooka-Ville* by Seth
70) *Very Vicky* & *The Very Vicky Junior Hepcat Funbook**** by John Mitchell & Jana Christy
71) *No Hope* by Jeff LeVine
72) *Cages* by Dave McKean
73) *Flood: A Novel In Pictures* by Eric Drooker
74) *Frank**** & *Jim* by Jim Woodring
75) *Concrete, C: Celebrates Earth Day, Fragile Creatures, Eclectica*, & *Think Like A Mountain**** by Paul Chadwick
76) *Pixy* by Max Andersson
77) *Kane* by Paul Grist
78) *Exit* by Nabiel Kanan
79) *"The Works of Evan Dorkin"* including *Dork, Milk & Cheese*, & *Dick Wad of the Mega-Vice Squad*
80) *Silly Daddy* by Joe Chiappetta
81) *Gregory & Tug & Buster** by Marc Hempel
82) *Optic Nerve & 32 Stories: The Complete Optic Nerve Mini-Comics**** by Adrian Tomine

83) *Slacker* by Doug Slack
84) *"The Works of Ted McKeever"* including: *Industrial Gothic*, Metropol*,* & *Plastic Forks**
85) *Big Numbers** by Alan Moore & Bill Sienkiewicz
86) *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* & *The Tale of One Bad Rat** by Bryan Talbot
87) *Hard Boiled* by Frank Miller & Geof Darrow
88) *Sanctuary* by Sho Fumimura & Ryoichi Ikegami
89) *Crying Freeman* by Kazuo Koike & Ryoichi Ikegami
90) *"The Works of Richard Sala"* including: *Hypnotic Tales*, Black Cat Crossing*,* & *The Chuckling Whatzit**
91) *Red Calloway's Big Bang** by Paul Sharar
92) *Zero Zero* edited by Kim Thompson
93) *Dark Horse Presents* & *Cheval Noir*
94) *Twisted Sisters* edited by Diane Noomin
95) *Wordsmith** by Dave Darrigo & R. G. Taylor
96) *The Silent Invasion** & *Surburban Nightmares** by Michael Cherkas & Larry Hancock
97) *"The Works of Dave Cooper"* including: *Pressed Tongue, Cynthia Petal's ... Sex Frenzy!, A Big Someplace, Chronic Idiocy, The Pied Piper of Hamelin, Suckle*,* & *Crumple**
98) *Strangers In Paradise* by Terry Moore
99) *Dangle* by Lloyd Dangle
100) *Way Out Strips** & *Invasion of the Mind Sappers** by Carol Swain
101) *Indian Summer* & *El Gaucho* by Hugo Pratt & Milo Minara
102) *Lost In The Alps** by Cosey
103) *World War III* edited by Kuper, Tobocman, & others
104) *Blah!** edited by Monte Beauchamp
105) *Longshot Comics: The Long and Unlearned Life of Roland Gethers* by Shane Simmons
106) *The Killing Joke* by Alan Moore & Brian Bolland
107) *Batman: Year One* by Frank Miller & David Mazzucchelli
108) *Cry for Dawn, Drama,* & *Dawn* by J.M. Linsner
109) *Druuna: Morbus Gravis (Vol I & II), Creatura (Vol III),* & *Carnivora (Vol IV)* by Paolo Eleuteri Serpieri
110) *One Life-Furnished In Early Moorcock** by Neil Gaiman & P. Craig Russell
111) *Hugo Tate: O, America* by Nick Abadzis
112) *Strange Embrace* by David Hine
113) *S.R. Bissette's Tyrant* by Stephen R. Bissette
114) *Shades of Gray* by Jimmy Gownley
115) *ComicsLit Magazine* edited by Terry Nantier
116) *Holy Cross* by Malachy Conev & various artists
117) *Six Degrees** by Martin Shipp & Marc Laming
118) *Strange Growths** by Jenny Zervakis
119) *The Adventures of A-Girl!** by Elizabeth Watasin
120) *Action Girl** edited by Sarah Dyer
121) *Top Shelf** edited by Brett Warnock
122) *Scenes From The Inside** edited by David Leavesley & Matthew Burton
123) *Arcade** edited by Art Spiegelman & Bill Griffith
124) *"The Works of James Kochalka"* including: *James Kochalka Superstar*, Little Mister Man*, Magic Boy & The Robot Elf*, M.B. & The Word of God*,* & *Paradise Sucks**
125) *Breathtaker* by Mark Wheatley & Marc Hempel
126) *The Replacement God** by Zander Cannon
127) *The Books of Ballads & Sagas** by Charles Vess
128) *Usagi Yojimbo** by Stan Sakai
129) *Sandman Mystery Theatre* by Matt Wagner & various artists
130) *Schizo* by Ivan Brunetti
131) *Dear Julia** by Brian Biggs
132) *Hummingbird** by Gregory Benton
133) *Starchild* & *Starchild: Crossroads**** by James A. Owen
134) *Thieves & Kings* by Mark Oakley
135) *Justin Green's Binky Brown Sampler* by Justin Brown
136) *Seven Miles A Second** by David Wojnarowicz & James Romberger
137) *Instant Piano* by Mark Badger, Kyle Baker, Robbie Busch, Stephen DeStefano, & Evan Dorkin
138) *"The Works of J. M. DeMatteis"* including: *Brooklyn Dreams, Seekers*, Blood: A Tale*,* & *Moonshadow**
139) *The Worst Thing I've Ever Done!** by Ted Rall
140) *The Job Thing** by Carol Tyler
141) *Armed & Dangerous** by Bob Hall
142) *Storeyville** by Sirk Productions
143) *Omaha The Cat Dancer* by Kate Worley & Reed Waller
144) *Faust* by David Quinn & Tim Vigil
145) *The Dreaming** edited by Alisa Kwitney
146) *Marvels* by Kurt Busiek & Alex Ross
147) *Kingdom Come** by Mark Waid & Alex Ross
148) *Rubber Blanket* by David Mazzuchelli
149) *Comics To Bore & Confuse You** by Jesse Hamm
150) *Girl Hero** by Megan Kelso
151) *Kingdom of the Wicked** by Ian Edginton & D'Israeli
152) *Box Office Poison** by Alex Robinson
153) *Savage Love* by Dan Savage & various artists
154) *Being An Account of the Life and Death of the Emperor Heliogabolus* by Neil Gaiman
155) *Tales From The Plague* by Dennis Cunningham & Richard Corben
156) *ArmageddonQuest* by Ronald Russell Roach
157) *Crush** by Burpo
158) *Swan** by Mike Moreu
159) *"The Mini-Comics of Matt Feazell*"*
160) *"The Works of Tom Tomorrow" including: Greetings From This Modern World*, Tune In Tomorrow*,* & *The Wrath of Sparky**
161) *Minimum Wage** by Bob Fingerman
162) *Red River* by Stephen Blue
163) *Negative Burn** edited by Joe Pruett
164) *Snicker** edited by Rich Balducci
165) *The Big Guy and Rusty The Boy Robot* by Miller & Darrow
166) *The Spider Garden, Lumenagerie***, Hydrophidian***,* & *Cathexis**** by Michael Manning
167) *Talk Dirty* by Matthias Schultheiss
168) *Batman: Arkham Asylum* by G. Morrison & Dave McKean
169) *Chiaroscuro: The Private Lives of Leonardo da Vinci** by Pat McGreal, David Rawson, Chas Truog, & Rafael Kayanan
170) *Vignettes: The Autobiographical Comix of Valentino* by Jim Valentuno
171) *Emma Davenport** & *The Windburnt Plains of Wonder** by Gina Prosch & Richie Prosch
172) *Arthabe** by Jessica Abel
173) *King-Cat Comics & Stories** by John Porcellino
174) *Private Beach: Fun/Perils in the Trudyverse* by David Hahn
175) *Captain Zap** by Olver Simonson
176) *No Zone** edited by Knickerbocker
177) *Narcolepsy Dreams* by Jaime Crespo
178) *Oink: Heaven's Butcher** by John Mueller
179) *From Inside* by John Bergin
180) *Tell Me, Dark* by John Ney Rieber & Kent Williams
181) *Silent City** by Erez Yakin
182) *Tongue Lash** by Randy/Jean-Marc Lofficier & Dave Taylor
183) *Budda On The Road** by Colin Upton
184) *Batman: Black & White**
185) *Castle Waiting** by Linda Medley
186) *Street Smell** by Bruce Mutard
187) *Akiko On The Planet Smoo** by Mark Crilley

The Best Magazines & Fanzines:

M1) *The Comics Journal* edited by Gary Groth
M2) *Destroy All Comics* (?) edited by Jeff LeVine
M3) *Crash* (?) edited by Steve Solomos
M4) *Factsheet Five* edited by R. Seth Friedman
M5) *Indy* edited by Jeff Mason
M6) *Feature Magazine** edited by Charles Brownstein
M7) *Poopsheet* edited by Rick Bradford
M8) *Subliminal Tattoos* (?) edited by Robert DuPree
M9) *Full Frontal Nudity* (?) edited by Kyle Rimkus
M10) *Comic Culture* (?) edited by Richard Relkin

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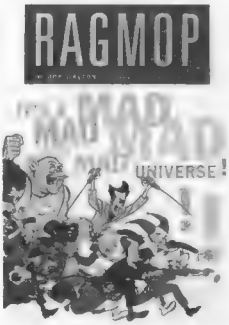

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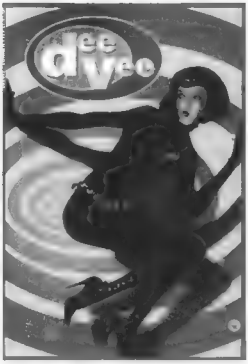

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Helpful Industry Addresses

Here's a list of "Alternative-Friendly Retailers," "Silver/Golden-Age Retailers," "Publishers," "Writers & Artists," "Magazines & Fanzines," "Distributors," "Printers," "Digital Color House(s)," "CBLDF," "Xeric Foundation," "Professional Associations," "Industry Awards," "Conventions," and "Supply Houses" to help you navigate your way through the comics industry. The entries are listed in alphabetical order.

Special thanks to Jeff Mason (of *Indy*) for providing his on-line retailer address list to me. — Read *Indy*!

Alternative-Friendly Retailers

This retailer section was prepared with the self-publisher / self-promoter in mind. Every store on this list is a big supporter of alternative comics and/or a member of a large chain. ... And please don't blame anyone else for my "rating system" — it's all my doing! — but it should help you target particular stores (especially if you're working with a limited budget):

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September 1994

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when my brother was god

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Mickey Death

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March 1995

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Mamya

Randy Reynaldo
Adventure Strip Digest

Scott Gilbert
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September 1995

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Matthew Smith
alec: dear

March 1996

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September 1996

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from Hungary

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Rafael Navarro
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March 1997

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"Fanatics"

The following are a sampling of letters received in response to *The Staros Report-1996*. I've printed them in the order in which they were received.

My responses are in *italics*.

The best response I've received so far!

Denis Kitchen
Kitchen Sink Press
Northampton, MA

Thank you very much for the recent package and certificate. I was very pleased to learn that Kitchen Sink Press earned your *1996 Best Publisher Award*. I was intrigued by your selections and capsule reviews. You are to be commended for your intense devotion to analyzing and celebrating the best our medium offers.

As with any one-man list you can and will be second-guessed to death. Since my company came out on top it would not be wise for *me* to second-guess you very harshly. I do have to agree, however, with letter writer Eric Reynolds who is astonished that nothing by Harvey Kurtzman appears on your "best of" list. In your reply you indicate that no specific work by him lives up to today's standards. Have you read *Harvey Kurtzman's Jungle Book*? To me, "Organization Man in the Grey Flannel Executive Suite" and "Decadence Degenerated" are absolutely timeless masterpieces. His solo and collaborative pieces in *Front Line Combat*, *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Mad* are among the most powerful and influential in the medium. The stories are wildly uneven, but for sheer technique and composition, nothing can touch the best "Little Annie Fanny" stories he and Elder did in *Playboy*. When Kitchen Sink Press collects the material from *Humbug*, *Trump*, *Help!* and the "Annie Fanny's," perhaps it will be easier to judge his work in perspective.

I am also disappointed that you have failed to cite Mark Schultz's wonderful *Xenozoic*, and *Kings in Disguise* by James Vance and Dan Burr.

The Staros Report is a lively, idiosyncratic publication and I wish you the best of success with it.

◊

With regard to Kings in Disguise *and* Xenozoic Tales: Kings in Disguise *had all the trappings of a fine graphic novel, but somehow the whole project seemed to fall short of developing characters I really cared about. After a while, all I wanted to do was skip pages — not a good sign. But with* Xenozoic Tales, *I must admit, you do have a gem! Schultz's artwork is mesmerizing — Have you ever noticed how he draws a "simple" head of hair? My god! No wonder it takes him a year to put one out! ... But even though I enjoy his provocative story lines, and recognize that the series represents the pinnacle of the adventure strip genre, it's just not a* genre *that speaks to my soul.*

Brett Warnock
Primal Groove Press
Portland, OR

Hello!! Hey, man ... *The Staros Report* is one of the most ambitious "fan" publications I've ever seen. I myself am just a pup (30 yrs.) but I imagine this is what *CBG*, *The Comics Journal*, or any number of the older fanzines would have been like 30 years ago. An insane labor of love.

Most amazingly, your tastes are as close to mine as *anyone* I know. Said tastes not limited by "genre," "high-brow vs. low-brow" distinctions and the like, instead (like my tastes in music) I just dig what's real!! If the heart and soul shines through, technical skill is enthusiastic, and talent is there, chances are I'll like it.

I've also loathed hard-line attitudes that simply seek to dis other companies and "invalidate" entire genres. What's up with that?

◊

I've been waiting for this particular letter for four *years! I've wanted to hear someone — anyone! — in the alternative comics industry say (out loud) that they would never "turn their nose up" at quality because of its label. .. That's mee to a Tee!... By the way, Brett Warnock is one of the coolest people in the biz. He not only has my critical endorsement (via* Top Shelf *this issue), but also my highest personal endorsement as well. ... Be sure to catch his "primal groove."*

Joe Zabel
Known Associates Press
Cleveland Heights, OH

Thanks for the copy of the latest *Staros Report*. It looks great and is a great read. Your comic in the back with Mike Hoffman was excellent! Not only was the art great, but it didn't get in the way of the story, as often happens in artist/writer collaborations. I hope to see more work from you, hopefully teamed with Hoffman.

Reviewing your "Guide," I think it's a very diversified and interesting list. I can't think of many first-rate works that aren't on the list — although there's a lot of things on the list I'd take off, and I'd change the order all around.

No *Batshit*. Crumb in the "Top 10." I think I'd make either Beto's *BEM* or Brown's *I Never Liked You* the best of all time. I liked *V for Vendetta*, but not enough for "Top 20" status.

Major works you didn't mention: *It's All True* by Scott Gilbert, Larry Gonick's *The Cartoon History of the Universe* ("Top 10" for sure), the works of Matt Feazell, David Collier, Mack White, Colin Upton, and Dame Darcy. The comic series *Neil The Horse* and *Journey* (Bill Loebs). As a matter of fact, my favorite issue of *Journey* was a unique *Neil The Horse* crossover; one of the best Christmas stories ever in comics. How about *Unsupervised Existence*?

Although you mentioned *Raw*, I'd give special mention to Gary Panter's *Jimbo* series, the rawest of the *Raw*. Also *Fires* by Mattoti. And the artist who did *Joe's Bar*, I can't remember his name but he was one of the greats! Well, guess I won't be making up a "Top 120" list if I can't remember the artists' names! ... Take it easy, and good luck in comics!

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everything in your top picks of the "most innovative" comics, and perhaps I missed this part, but I wondered how you set up the criteria for your list, my big question being, did you also include "innovative" books you didn't like or didn't care for? I know that if I had tried to do a list as you did, my prejudices would have unfortunately played a big part and I doubt I would have put together a "fair" list of the whole comics field. This thought came upon me when I saw your choice of *Morbus Gravis*, which, though it's visuals are admirable, and at times, the perfection of a certain artistic aesthetic, is also, subject-matter wise, so over-the-top and gratuitous, it makes me hold my nose — pee-yeu. However, whether you did hit personal walls of judgment or not, you did a pretty good job in listing many, good, interesting, and admirable pieces of work. Considering the range of work you included, I'll be catty and mention some creators I didn't catch in your listing: Julie Doucet's *Dirty Plotte*, Rumiko Takahashi, Hayao Miyazaki's *Nausicaa in the Valley of Wind*, *A' A Prime* (in Viz's *Manga Vizion*), Jamie Hewitt's *Tank Girl*, other creators who appeared in *Deadline* (before it looked like *Spin*), Nina Paley, and you know what? The list can go on and on for all I care. Anyone who is sincere, has a love for the medium, and desires to tell a story, makes a good comic in his or her own way. Whether it's special in some arty or innovative way comes down to personal taste and personal set-up of aesthetics. ... So enough of my rambling.

◊

Obviously, it was letters like Elizabeth's that inspired me to write the comics story that accompanies the reviews this issue. Hopefully, it answered her question.

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frustrating reading. I can't necessarily explain this very effectively other than to do an informal survey — I worked backward as far as page 29 and found the words "best ever" in 8 of the top 20. I agree that these things are amongst the best ever, but find the praise prose wears thin.

Geez, I didn't mean to start off by being a *cosmic bummer*, but the fact is that it clears the plate for me to repeat myself and say: it doesn't appear that anyone else has been willing yet to cross promotional lines and present a (rough draft of a) canon. You've done a ternific job. I turned away from theatre after a very short time, because the "crowd" seemed (was) insular and cannibalistic; one of the first aspects of the comic scene that attracted me was the (relative) base of support that comes from being part of an underappreciated and trod-upon community. Fans become creators; creators remain fans. This is not a traditional corporate pyramid structure, and I'd love to think that it's one of the reasons for the tangle Marvel has got itself in: simply, that traditional corporate values cannot, by definition, foster artistic achievement.

Ooh, I forgot to mention how much I enjoyed *The Amateur Philosopher*! ... next letter, I guess ...

◊

As for your comment about the comics community not being cannibalistic, you're right on the mark! I have also found great support (and excellent constructive criticism) from fans and pros alike. I was a musician for years, and audiences at certain (trendy) clubs always wanted to find a reason to hate you. In comics, it's really the other way around. Viva la comics!

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sent to *CBG* last year and was never printed. I would add that the group that would do the comics advertising could be run by a powerful person and function like the CBLDF. Documentaries would also be good to produce about comics.

I agreed with most of your choices. You left out, to my dismay, a couple more mainstream, yet amazing comics. I suggest you try *The Maxx* from Image comics. Start with #1 on this one, or you'll be lost. Trust me, ... it's a story with deep ties into the inner psyche. And I might tell you about a graphic novel I just finished called, *Aeon Flux: The Heroditus File*. (If it sounds like I'm some MTV junkie, I'm not.) This file is not total brilliance, but it brings up sophisticated points on God, truth, and society in general. Expensive, yet almost worth it.

◊

You know, I've recently come to the same conclusion as well, that we do need a "CBLDF" for cooperative advertising. A unified front to attack the world. Just think how effective the "Got Milk?" campaign has been, and it's funded by all of the milk companies participating as a council. Of course, we aren't as rich as they are, and would have to set our sights much lower. But something could be done, don't you think? ... How about ... the Comic Book Ad Council? ... Maybe starting with a billboard campaign? A late-night cable TV campaign? A magazine ad campaign in places like Spin, Rolling Stone, *etc.? Tied into my recommendations from last year's Report?*

Jenny Zervakis
Strange Growths
Durham, NC

It was enjoyable to read *The Staros Report*. Definitely some intriguing reading material out there like *The Spiral Cage*, *Tyrant*, *Strange Embrace*. I like the "Comics are for Kids" and how you categorize different groups of comics as different routes to getting into comics. It's hard for me to explain the depth and breadth of comics to friends who don't read comics, and I'll just recommend this 'zine to people. Often their first exposure has been either arty anthologies like *Raw* picked up in coffee shops, or through series like *Sandman*, tho' it is usually the former group that goes on to explore other alternative comics. — Keep up the good work!

Chris Shorb
Third Planet Comics
Torrance, CA

The Staros Report - 1996 is amazing. I agreed with most of your guide, although not necessarily with the order. I am going to go and read *V for Vendetta* again, since you put it at the very top. I remember enjoying it, but don't remember walking away going "Woooahh..." like I did at the end of the *Watchmen*. Maybe I missed something. Speaking of the *Watchmen*, of the revisionist superhero titles, this is the only one that would fall into my list of 121. The *Heroica* seemed to go more for shock value at the expense of any depth. I felt that *Marshal Law* got really crappy towards the end, with incredibly weak story lines holding together broad satire. One of the things I love about Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is that the story is fascinating on its own a few centuries later, and you do not need to be up on the contemporary politics he is skewering to enjoy the various chapters. *Marshal Law* will not hold up in three hundred years, entertaining as it is now (nor will a lot of *Cerebus* at that).

That said, while you tend to favor revisionist superheroes, I tend to really love fantasy comics (dislike most fantasy prose, however), action/adventure a la *Tintin*, and historical comics. Thus, I would like to recommend to you some cool comics recently released in those genres. Fantasy: *Arcana*, *Greymatter*, *Oz Squad*, and *Two-Headed Giant*; Action/Adventure: *Adventure Strip Digest*, *Hilly Rose*, *Jam: Urban Adventure*; *Pirate Corps!* (Evan's most serious work, and I think his best — we disagree here), and *Tapestry*; History: *Berlin* (which I am sure will make it into next year's Report), *Book Boom* (more literature than history), *Epicurus the Sage*, *Heritage Collection of Civil War Battles*, *Journey*, *Usagi Yojimbo*, and *Vietnam Journal*. Other titles I would have included are *Another Day*, *Dreamwalker*, *Grit Bath* (veeerrrvy creepy), anything by Don Rosa (his style reminds me of the old undergrounds, although I have heard that Rosa claims not to have been influenced by them at all), *Strangebaven*, *Tales from the Heart*, and *Wandering Star*. Of course, I like *Bone*, especially for the fantasy elements, but I respect and understand why you might not.

Although we disagree to a certain extent, I would say that we would agree that even the comics I list that you may not find fitting in your top 121 are still superior to what could be called "mainstream (superhero)[4] comics. This means that there are easily more than 140 titles worth promoting to the general public. I manage a store, and most of the titles you and I mentioned I consider to be worth stocking in some depth. In fact I am thinking of starting in-store subscriptions just to be able to give all my customers over 18 (or maybe 16) a copy of *The Staros Report* for free. Why not — if I had 100 subs, and just 10% each pick up two new titles, or twenty-five buy a new trade paperback they wouldn't have bought before, it has more than paid for the cost of the Reports. An added benefit of this is that I would now have a much more educated customer base who would spend more as they get re-interested in comics again. I may even get someone who subscribed to all superhero titles to at least try Eddie Campbell's *Bacchus*, the "oddest superhero comic in the business."

A final note, and then I will go. It seems that most of the letters you published were from creators (75%). While it's nice to know that your magazine is well regarded in the industry, as it should be, I would be much more interested in hearing about people who picked up your 'zine and found a whole new vista opened up to them. One of the major reasons that "good[4] comics do not get into the hand of more people is that most of the promotion and discussion is of the preaching-to-the-converted nature. When I see ad swaps between alternative and/or self-published comics, I think that although the ad is targeting the correct demographics, it is not bringing in any new money. When I hear "lit-com" creators singing your (well-deserved) praises, I feel that these are people like myself who already know about all the great comics out there. Next issue, I would love to see a letter writer say, "I used to read *Gen13* and *Shi*, and thought these were independent comics. Then I got a copy of *The Staros Report*, and sold my first prints of those silly adolescent fantasies for enough money for the complete set of *Sandman* trades, *V for Vendetta*, and

Understanding Comics." Now that I think about it, I bet all of us would.

◊

I too would love to have a stack of converted Gen13-*fan testimonial letters. And even though* The Staros Report *is really targeted (or, at least, half-targeted) at that audience, I'm starting to find out that those fans just won't pick it up without some prodding from a local alternative-minded retailer. ... And though you already know this, if more retailers really understood how* The Staros Report *could be used, and furthermore, went to the effort of actually recommending it to their customers, it would not only help customers find new and interesting things to read, it would also help the whole industry's bottom line.*

David Lasky
Boom Boom
Seattle, WA

I wasn't sure I would like this jumbo sized *Staros Report*, but I was blown away. I shouldn't have to tell you that this is something really special you've put together here. (Even if a lot of your choices *are* a bit odd for "note-worthy" comics). Keep on truckin'!

Daniel Tervoort
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada

The Staros Report - 1996 is an excellent publication. I look forward to subsequent editions being printed every year. (Now if only you can get more stores to *carry* the darned thing!) The idea of an "Overstreet" for people who want to "read" books as opposed to "collect" them is long overdue.

If I have any criticism about the book it is about your "blind side." You outright ignore a great number of books that fall outside of your own personal interest. Of course, no two people are ever going to agree on *all* of their likes and dislikes. Limiting inclusion to only "your" personal favorites seems to me to limit the book's value as a reference work.

Even though you may not like *Dirty Plotte* and *Pirate Corp$!* it seems to me that people with an interest in most of the other books that you describe in loving detail *would* like those books and should be told about them as well. I certainly have a personal dislike for many titles which have been listed (mostly of the Frank Miller variety) but I would not begrudge their inclusion in a book of this type. I think maybe a co-writer or two are needed who could comment on the titles that you don't think worthy of mention.

Your essay was good reading. I hope you also continue this every year ... commenting on the issues come to light in the previous twelve months. Possibly the "recommendations" paragraphs could be spun off into their own little section.

As far as *The Amateur Philosopher* goes, I am a little hesitant to speak because the subject matter just didn't appeal to me. I guess I have seen that same "sort" of story done just too many times in the past. There was very little new and different about it that would cause me to seek out further installments. Not that it was poorly done, mind you. I think maybe if the "fantasy sequences" were focused on in more detail it might have given the tale more oomph.

All in all, *The Staros Report* was a tremendous package, well worth the $$$! (Maybe next time you could try it in "bookshelf format" ... or is it too costly?) I look forward to the 1997 (and onward) editions!

◊

With regard to The Staros Report *being limited by my own personal choices ... well, I see no way around that. It's my reputation on the line, so I really can't review books that I don't like. The hope is that my tastes are broad enough (and detailed enough) to at least strike a similar chord in the seasoned reader, and offer a starting point to the new reader. And I'm convinced that adding more authors would only compound the problem, and also make the Report less "novel" (if that's the right word).*

Jerry Withrow
Elizabethtown, NC

The Staros Report for 1996 has been a most valuable and expensive reading experience for me. Valuable because it is just so packed with fascinating information, from the Eddie Campbell interview, to the addresses of publishers and mail-order sources — I have rarely encountered a publication I *use* so frequently.

Expensive, because it has led me to many quality books I had missed over the years and that I am now compelled to buy (when I can find them). I thought I had explored the field fairly well, but your list of the best comics and graphic novels brought to my attention many wonderful works that had somehow slipped through the cracks. Your first twenty or so selections gave me a lot of confidence in your taste, as they roughly coincided with mine — while exploring the rest of the list, I discovered some real gems I had missed: *Lone Wolf & Cub*, *Silly Daddy*, *No Hope*, *Why I Hate Saturn*, *Strange Embrace* — wonderful works all.

And I did not agree with everything — no surprise there, I guess. While I see where works like *The Crow*, *Faust*, and the works of Joseph Michael Linsner might have many supporters, they just don't connect with me. And where is *Zot*??? This book deserved to be paired with *Understanding Comics*. *Zot* was a project that was fun from the beginning and which evolved into a very moving piece of work in its later issues. I understand Scott McCloud sees potential for further development of this book and I genuinely look forward to whatever he will produce.

Also, I think you underestimate the comic book work of Grant Morrison. In books such as *Animal Man*, *Doom Patrol*, and *The Invisibles*, Morrison has given us some of the most off-beat and adventurous story lines of the past ten years. I find these stories much more interesting than his one work you do mention — *Arkham Asylum*.

Then we get down to quibbles — some truly distinctive work I think you underestimate, like that of

Jim Woodring's, Paul Pope, and the now completed *Cages*, but hey — at least you didn't ignore them. Maybe you can give them more of a shot in the future. ... New works to consider? How about Don Rosa's *Life of Scrooge McDuck*, Jason Lutes' *Berlin*, and Mike Mignola's *HellBoy*? I guess in the guilty pleasures category might fall *Preacher* and Joe Lansdale's *Jonah Hex* books.

Thanks again for your ... whatever it is. It's just an invaluable resource and I look forward to many future editions.

Steven Gilbert
I Had A Dream
Ontario, Canada

Got your 1996 *Staros Report* the other day and I wanted to write and let you know that I really enjoyed it. I agree with Don Simpson when he says it could become the definitive source for serious comics readers.

I originally intended to send you a huge, sprawling letter, listing all the changes and omissions I thought you ought to make in the next issue. But, what's the point of that? Nobody is going to totally agree on this sort of list. The subjective nature of the list is what makes it interesting ...

In general, I would not have included nearly as many revisionist superhero titles. I found the ranking for books such as *Frank*, *Cages*, *Rubber Blanket*, *THB*, *Weirdo*, *Acme Novelty Library*, *American Splendor*, and *RAW* to be too low for my taste. The ones I felt were rated too highly included *Akira*, *Hepcats*, *Wildlife* (rated higher than *Hate*, *American Splendor*, and *Palooka-Ville*?!?), *The Crow*, and *Sandman*.

I also looked over my bookshelf and want to recommend that you take a look at the following titles (if you haven't already). *Buzz Buzz Comics Magazine* (Horse Press) by Paul Pope; *Jimbo Adventures In Paradise* (Raw Books) and the ongoing *Jimbo* series (Zongo) by Gary Panter; *Frederick & Eloise: A Love Story* (Fantagraphics) by Brian Biggs; *Zap Comics* by various artists; *Dirty Plotte* (D&Q) by Julie Doucet, *The Jungle Book* and *Hey Look!* (KSP) by Harvey Kurtzman; *Big Numbers* (Mad Love) by Alan Moore and Bill the Sink ... I know, I know, only two issues were completed, but what a two issues!!; *Atomic City Tales* (KSP) and *The Land of Nod* (Black Eye) both by Jay Stephens; *Lost Girls* (KSP) by Alan Moore and Melinda Gebbie; *Blah!* (KSP) by various, a great anthology, esp #8; *Trailer Trash* (Tundra, now Fantagraphics) by Roy Tompkins, *Love That Bunch* (Fantagraphics) by Aline Kominsky-Crumb; *The Marat-Sade Journals* (Tundra) by Barron Storey; *I Can't Tell You Anything* (Penguin) and *East Texas* (The Real Comet Press) both by Michael Dougan, *Snake Eyes* and *Pictopia* (both Fantagraphics) two more great anthologies; *My True Story* (Fantagraphics) by Spain; *Underworld*, *Buzzbomb*, and *Sidetrack City* (all Fantagraphics), collections of strips by *Raw* artist Kaz; Barry Gifford's *Perdita Durango* (Avon, NeonLit series) by Bob Callahan and Scott Gillis, *King* (Fantagraphics) by Ho Che Anderson, *Billie Holiday*, *Sinner* (Fantagraphics), *Joe's Bar* (Catalan) all by José Muñoz and Carlos Sampayo; *Cowboy Henk King of Dental Floss* (Scissor Books) by Kamagurka and Herr Seele; *Squeak The Mouse* (2 volumes from NBM) by Mattioli, *The Biologic Show* (Fantagraphics) and *Dogbead* (Tundra) by Al Columbia. — Okay, hope that gives you some interesting stuff to look for. *[I'll say!]*

Andy Konky Kru
Dachshund Distribution
London, England

I can't believe the '96 *Report* isn't in every comics store over here. It could become really important. ... I disagree with lots in your *Report*, but do like it for the same reason that I adore *Understanding Comics* (which I disagree with even more), namely because it's a wonderful instigator of discussion. Thanks for not calling it *The Report*, because it *is* subjective (and the better for it). I don't share your enthusiasm for some mainstreamy comics like *Sandman* and *Cerebus*, but it's excellent that you place them so highly, because their many fans will be more inclined to trust your recommendation of something different, say *Peepsbow* or *Palestine*. My main objection to your 'zine is that there are so few others like it, giving different viewpoints. But I do have a few quibbles: 1) Why oh why is there no index of titles and authors? *[good question!]*, 2) The list of publishers could be made even more useful by adding little symbols indicating mainstream, alternative, small press, etc., 3) I always enjoy reading letters, please give more scope to them., . and 4) This is my very own pet peeve. It doesn't just apply to you but almost to every fanzine there is. Puhleeze use *complete* comics pages as illustrations, however small. Imagine a book on art history were all the reproductions show only a small detail of each painting, maybe a face or a tree. In a way that is what you and everybody else does and it drives me bananas. With comics the sequential is essential.

Finally some thoughts about your editorial, "Silly Rabbit!" The problem of establishing comics as an art form is more complicated than format or goodwill of retailers. The reason the culturati find comics so difficult to accept could be because it is the only art form without precedent. Narrative painting is usually claimed to be the ancestor, but I believe that is a mistake. Even sequential panels, like some religious art, doesn't quite fit the bill: the scenes may depict consecutive stages of a story, but they don't drive the story forward by themselves the way the simplest strip-cartoon does. For instance, two panels; a stickman jumping up and then landing on his feet. This sudden change from a preceding moment is what makes strip cartoons so energetic, but also so disconcerting, because this particular aspect, which is their essence, really doesn't have any tradition. So-called new art forms like cinema and photography are the sophisticated end result that evolved from dancing around the fire and smearing mud onto the cave wall. Why wasn't the apparently obvious construct of fluid pictorial narrative used ages ago? Because comics are infinitely more revolutionary and radically newer than anything else ever, that's why. Far more so than the invention of the written word or the moving image.

All art can be divided into two groups: 1) static (art and design), and 2) performance (drama & music). Of all the many, many human expressions of creativity, there is one, and only one, that doesn't fit those two categories, and that's comics. They belong to both categories and therefore to none exclusively, which makes comics the only genuine "Gesamtkunstwerk" (all encompassing work of art).

Parents often dismiss comics because, unlike novels, they don't force you to imagine the visuals. The reason there is no similar objection to painting (static) or cinema (performance) is because those don't mix the two categories. In a way, reading a novel is closer to cinema than to comics, the reader is sort of performing for himself. Visuals in cinema don't interfere with the performance because it never stops. While you are watching the film, it doesn't encroach on the first, static, art category. Visuals in comics can seem to interfere a lot, because the static artwork is so close to painting, while the narrative belongs to the performance arts. Both art forms are taken in simultaneously. To read/look at a comic one has to develop a completely new and very modern way of reception. Children, who have fewer fixed ideas about traditional arts, usually find accepting a comic for what it is much easier than adults, who tend to view it as "a form of literature" or "a graphic art." It is both and neither, it's uniquely separate.

After all that theorizing, a few practical suggestions:

• Each self-publisher could become a mini-distributor. Get hold of 20 copies of a dozen or so other self-published titles that you really like, make a little price list and give this to anyone who may also want to order your own comics.

• Larger publishers could try to get a sponsorship deal to put some of their titles into every single college library in the country. The reason I eventually bought *Palestine* was because I found it in my local library.

• In the 1940s Will Eisner offered his intelligent stories as a complete little package to newspapers. Publishers like Fantagraphics should set up a similar thing, a weekly 8-page giveaway for highbrow newspapers. An attractive and collectible proposition like that could greatly boost the readership (of paper and comics). *[I really like this idea!]*

• Peter Ashton (of Strands) told me about a scheme cooked up by the shop Nostalgia Comics in Birmingham, England. They have a special shelf with "recommendations" which you are allowed to exchange if you don't like them! Seems to work, apparently.

• Always give only one thing as presents for Birthdays, Christmas, or invitations. Yup, comics.

• I know one should support comics stores, but if the retailers in your area are stubbornly fanboy-oriented, try to order graphic novels from regular bookstores. Choose one that has potential to become converted and tell your friends to target that shop with orders as well.

• If you know any art teachers, persuade them to set up comic projects in their classes, with the emphasis on autobiography. Like, "My Holiday," as a comic. As you see, I believe in catching them young!

Philip Nugent
New Orleans, LA

The great thing about *Staros* is that it all carries the charge of one man's passionate interest. The text is unassuming, modest; so are the lists, by definition. "Listen," it says, "This is all just one guy's opinion. The titles, the interview – it's all just something I'm interested in." And underneath that, you can hear a voice murmur: "Which means it's important enough that I went to the trouble of bringing it to your attention." Thanks ...

◊

Phil wins the award for the longest letter in history! It weighed in at 74 pages, handwritten!!! And it was unbelievably eloquent, informative ... and grammatical too! I wish I could've run all of it here, but, of course, there's not enough room for that. But I'll at least list the books he talked about in his own self-styled "Report." I hope he takes my advice and becomes a writer, 'cause we could surely use someone as articulate and informed as he is:

"The works of Harvey Kurtzman," *Arcade, Blab!, The Jam*, "The works of Mark Martin," *Tomato, Catchpenny Comics, Cud, Hellblazer, Jonah Hex: Two-Gun Mojo & Riders of the Worm* (and such), *Atomic City Tales, Real Stuff, Real Smut, Real Schmuck, Big Mouth*, "The works of Bob Fingerman," *Doom Patrol #19-#64, The Job Thing, Elektra Assassin, Metropol, I Can't Tell You Anything, Real Life, Jizz, Anarchy, Young Lust*, "The works of Rick Geary," Flaming Carrot, "The works of Skip Williamson," "The works of Phil Foglio," "The works of Carol Lay," *True Swamp, The Tale of One Bad Rat*, "The works of Brian Bolland," *Journey, Torpedo 1936, The Rocketeer, Dirty Plotte, Death Warmed Over, Meat Cake, This Modern World, Artbabe, Enigma, Age of Reptiles, Up From Bondage, The Magician's Wife, Moonshadow*, "The works of Lynda Barry," "The works of Matt Groening," *Any Resemblance To Persons Living Or Dead Is Purely Coincidental, Alien World, Twisted Tales, Perramus, Starman, The Batman Adventures, Batman & Robin Adventures*, and "The works of Richard Sala."

Plus he had a whole bunch of "Honorable Mentions," and commented on a slew of other titles while he was talking about the ones I just listed. ... Man, he knew his stuff! And it obviously had some effect on this year's Report.

Well, that's it for this issue!

Before I go, I just want to thank everyone for writing! You have no idea how much I've benefited from the encouragement, advice, and constructive criticism I've received this year!

And I hate to close with a plug for my own book, but if you haven't read The Staros Report - 1996 *yet, you need to do so.*

I was honest enough last year to say that the '94 & '95 issues were obsolete, so maybe you can trust me when I say that you really do need the '96.
It's just $5.50 postpaid from me!

See ya' next time!

Your friend thru comics, Chris Staros

...AND ALL I TRIED TO DO WAS TELL THE TRUTH!

There are great parallels between finding a mate and finding a great comic book. What initially attracts you to both is their beauty, but what makes you fall in love is their personality and depth. For this reason, there are many beautiful comics I will never read, and there are a few charming and purposeful comics that I will read and love forever.

INTRODUCTION

So what is ***The Staros Report?***

A glorified fanzine? The annual ramblings of a wanna-be? A 100-page discussion of the most intelligent and innovative comics in the industry? Right, on all counts! It's mostly, dare I say it, "words," but if you love comics as much as I do, take the time to read it. It should point you to something new.

Your friend thru comics,

Chris Staros

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THE STATE V.S. CHRIS STAROS

PART ONE

MR. STAROS, DO YOU REALLY EXPECT THIS COURTROOM TO BELIEVE YOUR STORIES?
YES, SIR. THEY'RE THE WHOLE TRUTH, NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH. SO HELP ME... WHATEVER.
STORY © CHRIS STAROS ART © MIKE HOFFMAN
COME ON, MR. STAROS. YOU EXPECT US TO BELIEVE THAT YOU ACTUALLY BROKE FOUR KETCHUP BOTTLES YOUR FIRST DAY ON THE JOB?
YES, SIR.
AND THAT THE SO-CALLED ICE-CREAMSTORE DID NOT HAVE ANY ICE-CREAM ON THE PREMISES?
YES, SIR. THAT'S CORRECT.
AND MR. STAROS, DO YOU ALSO EXPECT THIS COURTROOM TO BELIEVE THAT YOU'VE ACTUALLY GIVEN BIRTH?
WELL, YOU'RE TAKING THAT WAY OUT OF CONTEXT.
JUST ANSWER THE QUESTION. DID YOU USE THE WORDS "I GAVE BIRTH" OR NOT?
WELL... YES... I DID.
THEREFORE, MR. STAROS, DOESN'T IT SEEM MORE LIKELY... THAT YOU'VE JUST TAKEN BLATANT LIBERTIES WITH THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMICS GENRE FOR PROFIT AND NOTORIETY!!?
HUH!
OBJECTION, YOUR HONOR! HE'S BADGERING M'-THE WITNESS!
I WARNED YOU THAT IT WASN'T WISE TO ACT AS YOUR OWN DEFENSE COUNSEL-- OVERRULED. YOU MUST ANSWER THE QUESTION.
NO, I DID NOT TAKE ANY LIBERTIES, AND IT REALLY PISS..
NO FURTHER QUESTIONS, YOUR HONOR.
YOUR WITNESS. AND YOU MAY REMAIN SEATED IF YOU LIKE.
THANK YOU YOUR HONOR.
AS I WAS SAYING BEFORE I WAS SO RUDELY INTERRUPTED.. IT REALLY PISSES ME OFF THAT NO ONE BELIEVES ME. I CAN'T HELP IT IF SOME PEOPLE USE THIS GENRE TO TELL PAUL BUNYAN TALES.
ALL OF THESE STORIES ARE TRUE! AND IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, YOU CAN JUST UM...UM...UM...
TAP-TAP-TAP.

THE LASTING IMPRESSIONS OF A JACK-KNIFE

IN THE SUMMER OF THE THIRD GRADE, I FINALLY CONVINCED MY PARENTS* TO GET ME A KNIFE. IT WAS OF THE CUB SCOUT VARIETY--SMALL, BUT WITH A SHARP STEEL BLADE THAT SNAPPED INTO PLACE WHEN OPENED AND CLOSED.

IT MAY SOUND CLICHÉ, HONEY, BUT I HAD ONE WHEN I WAS HIS AGE.

*WELL... DAD ACTUALLY.

STORY © CHRIS STAROS ART © MIKE HOFFMAN

AND THOUGH I'D NEVER OWNED A KNIFE BEFORE, I WAS IMMEDIATELY SEIZED WITH THAT EPHEMERAL CHILDHOOD DESIRE TO BECOME AN EXPERT AT ALL THINGS "KNIFING"

SO TRADITION SPEAKS LOUDER THAN COMMON SENSE ONCE AGAIN. IF HE GETS HURT, I'M COMING AFTER YOU, BUSTER.

I LOVE YOU TOO.

I HAD NO IDEA THAT I WOULD GO WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE...

HEY MOM. DO WE HAVE ANYTHING I CAN CARVE?

OOOH... I GUESS YOU CAN GET A COUPLE BARS OF SOAP FROM THE BATHROOM IF YOU REALLY WANT TO.

WOW! THAT'S A GOOD IDEA, MOM!

BUT YOU BE CAREFUL! AND DON'T MAKE A MESS!

PLAY WITH IT OUT ON THE PICNIC TABLE, OKAY?

THAT'S WHERE I WAS GOING MOM, GEEZ.

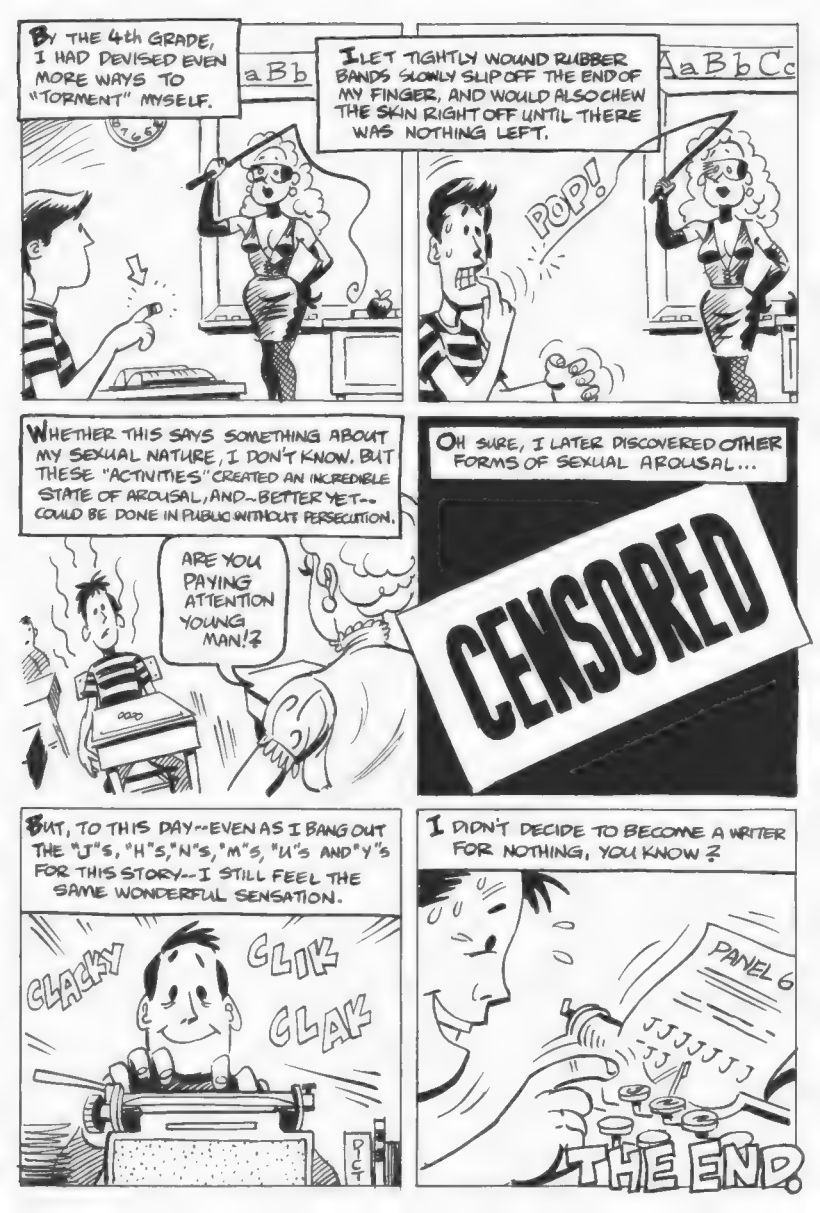
AS GOOD INTENTIONS RARELY SUBSTITUTE FOR SKILL, I SOON LEARNED THAT THE ONLY THING I WAS CAPABLE OF CARVING WERE SMALLER PIECES OF SOAP.

BUT THAT DIDN'T DETER ME. I FIGURED IF I CONCENTRATED HARD ENOUGH, AND MADE EACH CUT AS DECISIVE AS POSSIBLE, A MASTERPIECE WOULD SURELY EMERGE.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT WAS A TOTAL SURPRISE...

THE KNIFE SNAPPED SHUT.
A-A-I-I-EE!
NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE TIP OF MY FINGER WAS CUT CLEAN OFF. ONLY A PIECE OF SKIN KEPT IT FROM FALLING TO THE GROUND AS I RAN TO THE HOUSE.
M-O-O-O-M!!!!
OH MY GOD! WHAT HAPPENED!?
THE KNIFE..UH-HU-UH... SNAPPED SHUT...AND... UH-HU-UH...CUT MY FINGER OFF..UH-HU-UH...
LET ME SEE. --Oh Jesus-- IT'S GONNA BE ALL RIGHT NOW... OKAY?
UH..HU-UH... UH-HU-UH...
WHAT CAN I SAY? MOM HAD ME CALMED DOWN, WRAPPED IN GAUZE, AND ON THE WAY TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM IN WHAT SEEMED LIKE SECONDS.
SKREEET!!
MOMS--YOU GOTTA LOVE 'EM!
THE DOCTOR IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM SAID THAT THE FINGER TIP COULD BE SAVED, AND HE PULLED OUT A NEEDLE WITH WHICH TO ANESTHETIZE MY FINGER.
THAT'S IT. YOU JUST HOLD ONTO THAT FINGER REAL TIGHT AND WE'RE GOING TO FIX IT UP, ALL RIGHT?
UN-HUH.
MY ACTUAL RECOLLECTION--WHICH CAN HARDLY BE THE TRUTH--IS THAT HALF OF THE NEEDLE WENT INTO MY FINGER AND CAME OUT ALL CRINKLED FROM HITTING THE BONE.
I CLOSE MY EYES AND STILL SEE IT THAT WAY.
EVENTUALLY, THOUGH, THE TRAUMA WAS OVER. THE DOCTOR STITCHED ME UP, AND WE WERE ON OUR WAY HOME. --AND I'M PRETTY SURE WE STOPPED FOR AN ICE CREAM ALONG THE WAY, AS ALL MOMS INSTINCTIVELY KNOW WHEN THE "PURPLE HEART" OF "KIDDOM" SHOULD BE AWARDED.
HE'LL BE JUST FINE NOW, MRS. STAROS. GOOD AS NEW IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS.

WITHIN A FEW WEEKS, IT WOULD SEEM THAT EVERYTHING WAS BACK TO NORMAL.
I WAS ONCE AGAIN PLAYING WITH MY FRIENDS, AND MY DAD HAD SOMEHOW MANAGED TO ESCAPE MY MOM'S WRATH BY BEING OUT TO SEA WHEN EVERYTHING HAPPENED.
NO FAIR USING A WATER WEENIE!
ALLY-ALLY IN COME FREE!
... WITH A HIGH TOMORROW SOMEWHERE AROUND 80.
VROOOOM... ERT!
THE ONLY REMAINING EVIDENCE WAS A SMALL SCAR AND THE FACT THAT MY FINGER WAS NOW SLIGHTLY SQUARED-OFF ON ONE CORNER.
WELL, THAT WAS THE ONLY VISIBLE EVIDENCE...
A MONTH AFTER THE ACCIDENT, I STARTED TO NOTICE A STRANGE THING: THE TIP OF MY FINGER EXPERIENCED A HIGHLY PLEASURABLE SENSATION WHEN RUBBED OR PLAYED WITH.
WOW!
AND THOUGH I WAS TOO YOUNG TO REALIZE IT THEN, THIS NEWLY HEALED FINGER WAS PRODUCING THE EXACT SAME SENSATION AS SEXUAL AROUSAL.
AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG BEFORE THE "FINGER RUB" BECAME A PART OF MY EVERYDAY LIFE. IT WAS A GREAT DIVERSION, AND CAME IN ESPECIALLY "HANDY" WHEN HOMEWORK OR PESKY GIRLS WERE ON MY MIND.


BY THE 4th GRADE, I HAD DEVISED EVEN MORE WAYS TO "TORMENT" MYSELF.
aBb
I LET TIGHTLY WOUND RUBBER BANDS SLOWLY SLIP OFF THE END OF MY FINGER, AND WOULD ALSO CHEW THE SKIN RIGHT OFF UNTIL THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT.
AaBbCc
POP!
WHETHER THIS SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT MY SEXUAL NATURE, I DON'T KNOW. BUT THESE "ACTIVITIES" CREATED AN INCREDIBLE STATE OF AROUSAL, AND--BETTER YET--COULD BE DONE IN PUBLIC WITHOUT PERSECUTION.
ARE YOU PAYING ATTENTION YOUNG MAN!?
OH SURE, I LATER DISCOVERED OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL AROUSAL...
CENSORED
BUT, TO THIS DAY--EVEN AS I BANG OUT THE "J"s, "H"s, "N"s, "M"s, "U"s AND "Y"s FOR THIS STORY--I STILL FEEL THE SAME WONDERFUL SENSATION.
CLACKY
CLIK
CLAK
I DIDN'T DECIDE TO BECOME A WRITER FOR NOTHING, YOU KNOW?
PANEL 6
JJJJJJ
JJ
THE END.

THE BOY SCOUT & THE BEAST

STORY © CHRIS STAROS ART © MIKE HOFFMAN

WHEN I WAS IN THE 5TH GRADE, I WENT ON MY FIRST BOY SCOUT CAMPING TRIP. WE PILED INTO CARS AND HEADED FOR THE MOUNTAINS. A BUNCH OF LEPRECHAUNS ON SPEED.

EVERYTHING WAS OKAY WHEN WE GOT THERE, BUT BY THE TIME WE PUT OUR TENTS UP AND HAD LUNCH, I REALIZED I HAD TO GO "NUMBER TWO".

HEY MISTER, WHERE'S THE BATHROOM?

YOU'RE IN THE FOREST, SON! THERE'S NO BATHROOMS HERE. GO DIG A HOLE IN THE GROUND AND USE A COUPLE OF LEAVES.

I WAS ABSOLUTELY HORRIFIED. MY PHYSICAL SHYNESS AT THAT AGE WAS AT ITS PEAK, AND IT HAD NEVER OCCURRED TO ME THAT I MIGHT HAVE TO "EXPOSE" MYSELF TO THE OTHER SCOUTS OR USE LEAVES IN THE WOODS.

GO ON, ROUGH IT A LITTLE.

I WAS SO INTIMIDATED BY THE THOUGHT OF "GOING" IN THE FOREST THAT I DECIDED TO JUST HOLD IT.

AND THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN FINE, EXCEPT THE CAMPING TRIP LASTED FOR THREE DAYS, AND I WAS TOO STUPID TO CUT DOWN ON MY EATING.

MORE BEANS?

YES, PLEASE.

BY THE SECOND DAY, ALL OF MY MENTAL AND PHYSICAL ENERGY WAS PREOCCUPIED WITH "HOLDING IT IN". THE DREADED BOWEL MOVEMENT HAD BECOME A BEAST THAT SCREAMED FOR A LIFE OF ITS OWN.

HOW I MADE IT TO THE THIRD DAY I'LL NEVER KNOW, BUT THE TIME OF DEPARTURE HAD FINALLY ARRIVED.

ONLY THREE MORE HOURS AND I'M HOME FREE.

UNFORTUNATELY, MY SUBCONCIOUS THOUGHTS MUST HAVE TIPPED OFF THE "BEAST" THAT THE TIME OF ITS BIRTH WAS IMMINENT. I ACTUALLY SHUDDERED THE WHOLE WAY HOME, BATTLING TO KEEP IT AT BAY.

WHEN I WAS FINALLY DROPPED OFF AT MY HOUSE, I PRACTICALLY BOWLED MY MOTHER OVER AS I RAN TO THE BATHROOM AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS.

AND EVEN THOUGH THE "BEAST" SENSED THAT THE "BOMBS AWAY" COMMAND HAD BEEN ISSUED, I SOMEHOW MANAGED TO GET MY PANTS DOWN BEFORE IT CAME BURSTING OUT.

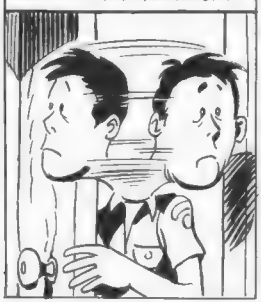
I GAVE BIRTH THAT DAY. OUT OF MY TEN-YEAR-OLD BODY CAME A MONSTER SO LARGE THAT I ALMOST PASSED OUT AS I DELIVERED IT.

BUT AS I STOOD THERE, RELIEVED THAT MY ORDEAL WAS FINALLY OVER, I SOON REALIZED THAT THE BEAST WOULD **NOT** GO DOWN THE TOILET.

REPEATED FLUSHINGS NEITHER REDUCED NOR DISPATCHED THE DEMON. IT HAD JUST BEEN BORN, AND WOULD NOT GIVE UP ITS CHANCE OF A FRUITFUL LIFE.

I WAS PANICKED. I DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE TO BRING MOM INTO THIS PRIVATE DILEMMA. THAT WOULD HAVE JUST BEEN ONE MORE HORROR.

ALAS, AT THE AGE OF TEN, I HAD NOT THE MENTAL PROWESS NOR COURAGE TO FIGURE MY WAY OUT OF THIS PREDICAMENT.



I FINALLY GAVE IN AND APPROACHED DAD WITH MY SAD TALE.—HE WAS BY FAR THE EASIER ONE TO TALK TO WHEN "MANLY" ISSUES WERE AT STAKE.

THE LAST THING I REMEMBER AS I STOOD GUARD AT THE BATHROOM DOOR, WAS SEEING MY FATHER SHAKE HIS HEAD IN AMAZEMENT AS HE SAWED UP THE LARGEST TURD HE HAD EVER SEEN WITH A COAT HANGER.

CHIPS AHOY

WHEN I WAS FIFTEEN I EXPERIENCED MY FIRST SERIOUS NEED FOR CASH.

STORY © CHRIS STAROS
ART © MIKE HOFFMAN

AND--NO!--IT WASN'T FOR CARS OR GIRLS.*

HUNTINGTON MUSIC

Marshall

* WELL... NOT DIRECTLY, ANYWAY.

YOU SEE, I'D FANTASIZED ABOUT BECOMING A ROCK STAR FOR LIKE...FOREVER...BUT IT WAS PAINFULLY EVIDENT THAT MY DREAM WOULD NEVER MATERIALIZE IF I DIDN'T GET A BETTER RIG...BUT SIX HUNDRED BUCKS!

BLACK SABBATH

GEEZ, I THINK I'M GONNA HAVE TO GET A... gulp!... JOB.

WHAT MOTIVATED ME TO APPROACH THE CHIPS AHOY ICE CREAM PARLOR, I'LL NEVER KNOW.

PREMATURE BURIAL

I MEAN THE PLACE WAS A TOTAL EMBARRASSMENT. IT LOOKED LIKE A BIG RAMSHACKLE BOAT, WITH DECAYING ROUND PORTHOLES, BRASS SHIP RAILINGS, CAPTAIN'S CHAIRS AND EVERYTHING.

SQUEE! SQUIDLEY SQUEEEE!

BUT IT WAS WITHIN BICYCLE DISTANCE AND I HAD RECENTLY NOTICED THAT THEY HAD A "HELP WANTED" SIGN IN THE WINDOW.

I RODE BY ONE SUMMER DAY AND DOTTIE, THE OWNER, HIRED ME ON THE SPOT. SHE TOLD ME TO REPORT THE NEXT MORNING FOR TRAINING.

I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT FIRST DAY...

POP!

CHIPS AHOY

RALPH'S

694 lb

HEL-LO-O.
HI CHRIS. THIS IS SARA. SHE'S GOING TO BE WORKING WITH YOU TODAY. I'M SORRY, BUT I'VE GOT TO RUN.
I'M LEAVING THE STORE TO YOU TWO, BUT I'LL BE BACK FOR CLOSING AROUND SEVEN. EXCEPT THAT SARA GETS OFF AT SIX, SO I'LL JUST SEE YOU AT SEVEN. BYE!
O-KAY.
2 25 MOCHA RAISIN
1 29 BUBBLE GUM BLUEB
3 79 MINT JULEP STRAW
2 50 COCONUT CHOCO
PINEAPPLE BEEFA
HI.
HI YOURSELF.
UH... YOU BEEN WORKING HERE LONG?
A COUPLA WEEKS.
SO, WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THIS PLACE?
NOT MUCH, OTHER THAN IT'S A DIVE. BUT YOU'LL SEE THAT FOR YOURSELF SOON ENOUGH.
WELL, WHAT SHOULD I... DO?
COME ON BEHIND THE COUNTER AND I'LL SHOW YOU AROUND.
WELL, HERE'S THE-- OH-O!
WHAT?
HERE, PUT THIS HAT ON QUICK! YOUR FIRST CUSTOMER IS ABOUT TO COME IN.
WHAT!!?

AHEM... WELCOME TO CHIPS AHOY, HOW MAY I HELP YOU?
I'D LIKE A BANANA SPLIT, PLEASE.
FUDGE TOFFEE
BLUEBERRY
UH... OKAY... UM... JUST TAKE A SEAT OVER THERE FOR A MINUTE... AND I'LL... UM... MAKE ONE RIGHT UP FOR YOU.
PRUNE
SARA... SA-RA! GET OVER HERE.
WHAT?
THAT GUY OVER THERE JUST ORDERED A BANANA SPLIT!... HOW MAY I ASK... DO YOU MAKE ONE?
I DON'T KNOW. I'VE ONLY DONE SCOOPS SO FAR.
OH, YOU'RE A LOTTA HELP!
WELL, HERE'S THE DISH AT LEAST.
SEE, THANKS.
ALL RIGHT... I'VE HAD ONE BEFORE... CHOCOLATE, VANILLA, STRAWBERRY... 'NANA CUT DOWN THE MIDDLE, CHOCOLATE SAUCE, WHIPPED CREAM AND A CHERRY, RIGHT?
THAT SOUNDS PRETTY GOOD, BUT...
UH... SARA?
YEAH?
WHERE'S THE ICE CREAM? ALL THE TUBS ARE PRACTICALLY EMPTY.

WELL, DOTTIE'S BEEN HAVING A LITTLE MONEY PROBLEM LATELY, SO LIKE... SHE HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO BUY ANY.
WOW, AN ICE CREAM STORE WITHOUT ANY ICE CREAM. THIS HAS GOT TO BE A FIRST.
SO WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT THIS GUY'S BANANA SPLIT?
HERE, TAKE TWO BUCKS AND RUN TO RALPH'S FOR A THING OF NEAPOLITAN.
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING.
NOPE. THAT'S STANDARD PROCEDURE FOR CHIPS AHOY.
WELL... STALL HIM 'TIL I GET BACK THEN, OKAY?
NO PROBLEM.
I CAN'T...
...BELIEVE...
...I'M...
...ACTUALLY...
...DOING...
...THIS.
RALPH
CEREAL
PASTA
NEAPOLITAN
KOUT 7

NOT BAD. TWO MINUTES FLAT. I THINK THAT'S A NEW RECORD.
YEAH-YEAH, WHATEVER.
OKAY, WHERE DOES DOTTIE KEEP THE CHOCOLATE SAUCE?
YOU DON'T WANNA KNOW.
WHAT DO YA MEAN!?
IT'S OVER THERE, IN THAT KETTLE. BUT I'M WARNING YOU...ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK.
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM, I MEAN IT'S JU--EEZ-US!
YOU KIND OF HAVE TO PLUG IT IN TO LOOSEN UP THE SPOONS.
THIS CANNOT BE HAPPENING...
THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME. THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME...
JUST A MINUTE LONGER, MISTER....SORRY, BUT IT'S MY FIRST DAY AND I'M STILL LEARNING.
SHERB SORBET SU...
COFFEE
STRAWBERRY YOGURT
VANILLA CHOCOLA
IT'S...O-KAY. I'M IN NO REAL RUSH.
GREAT.
WELL, AT LEAST IT'S MELTING...HOW OLD IS THIS STUFF ANYWAY?
I DON'T KNOW, BUT THE GUY WHO QUIT LAST WEEK SAID THAT DOTTIE NEVER CLEANED IT OUT THE WHOLE TIME HE WAS HERE.

OH, MAN. I'M MAKING A MESS OF THIS THING. THIS IS GONNA BE THE UGLIEST BANANA SPLIT EVER MADE.
AT LEAST YOU'RE MAKING IT WITH L-O-V-E.
YOU'RE A REAL JEWEL, SARA. YOU KNOW THAT?
IT'S READY, MISTER.
SPLORT!
SORRY IT'S NOT REAL BEAUTIFUL, BUT IT'S MY FIRST DAY.
SO YOU SAID.
THAT'LL BE... TWO-FIFTY.
THANKS.
HERE YOU GO. KEEP THE CHANGE.
SARA?
YEAH?
IS THIS PLACE FOR REAL?
OH, YEAH... AND IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE GONNA FIT RIGHT IN.
I HAD SORT OF HOPED THAT WORKING IN AN ICE CREAM STORE WOULD BE, YOU KNOW, FUN.
YOU'VE GOT A LOT TO LEARN, CHRIS. FIRST OF ALL, THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A FUN JOB. AND SECONDLY, FOOD SERVICE IS THE WORST.
BUT COME ON, LET ME GIVE YOU THE GRAND TOUR. IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO SINCE DOTTIE SPLIT ON YOU THIS MORNING.
ALL RIGHT. LET'S DO IT.

WELL, TO MY LEFT, YOU WILL FIND THE WORLD'S FINEST SALAD BAR. BUT THE COOK QUIT LAST WEEK, SO DON'T LET ANYONE EAT OFF IT.
YOU MEAN ALL THIS STUFF'S BEEN SITTING OUT HERE FOR A WHOLE WEEK?
YEP.
OH, MAN. WHY HASN'T ANYONE CLEANED IT UP?
DO YOU WANNA TOUCH IT?
NOT REALLY.
OKAY THEN. JUST STEER THE CUSTOMERS TO THE FEW FLAVORS OF ICE CREAM WE STILL DO HAVE...THAT'S THE SECRET TO LIFE AT CHIPS AHOY.
NOW OVER HERE WE HAVE THE DISHWASHER. DOTTIE DOESN'T HAVE ANY SOAP, SO YOU JUST PUT 'EM IN THERE AND USUALLY THE HOT WATER GETS MOST OF THE CHUNKS OFF. SCRAPE OFF THE REST AND STACK THE DISHES AND STUFF OVER HERE.
SCRAPE OFF THE CHUNKS. I GOTTA REMEMBER THAT.
VERY GOOD.
AND BACK HERE WE HAVE THE BIG MIX-MASTERS AND THE FREEZER.
WHAT'S IN THE FREEZER, DEAD BODIES?
ALMOST.
MY GOD. WHAT THE HELL'S IN HERE?
FROM WHAT I UNDERSTAND, A FEW MONTHS BACK A GROUP OF LITTLE LEAGUE TEAMS WERE SUPPOSED TO COME IN FOR A PARTY. DOTTIE MADE UP ALL THE TREATS BUT NO ONE EVER SHOWED.
THIS IS THE WEIRDEST THING I'VE EVER SEEN. IT'S LIKE A HORROR MOVIE OR TWILIGHT ZONE EPISODE. YOU KNOW, WHERE THE OLD LADY IS STILL WAITING TO SERVE CAKE AT HER DEAD DAUGHTER'S BIRTHDAY PARTY.
IT'S AMAZING. THERE MUST BE A HUNDRED OF 'EM.
WELL, AT CHIPS AHOY, IT'S NOT JUST A JOB, IT'S AN ADVENTURE.
LEAD ON, SIR...

AFTER THE TOUR, SARA AND I JUST HUNG OUT AND SERVED CHOCOLATE CHIP AND ORANGE SHERBET--THE ONLY TWO FLAVORS WE ACTUALLY HAD --TO THE SIX WHOLE CUSTOMERS WHO CAME IN THAT AFTERNOON, AND AS THE DAY PROGRESSED, I FOUND MYSELF EVEN ENJOYING OUR SAD LITTLE PREDICAMENT.
A NEW SHIPMENT SHOULD BE HERE TOMORROW.
YEP. THAT OL' TRUCK SHOULD BE COMIN' 'ROUND ANY TIME NOW.
WELL, THE DELIVERY TRUCK BROKE DOWN IN ANAHEIM THIS MORNING AND ALL THE ICE CREAM MELTED. SO HOW 'BOUT SOME ORANGE SHERBET ON THE HOUSE, BOYS?
COOL.
LOOK, KID. THERE'S NO BUBBLE GUM LEFT. YOU EITHER WAIT FOR THE TRUCK OR YOU EAT SOME CHOCOLATE CHIP. WHAT'CHA GONNA DO?
BUT I WANT BUBBLE GUM!
EVENTUALLY, SARA LEFT FOR THE DAY AND I WAITED FOR DOTTIE TO RETURN AT SEVEN.
IT WAS NICE MEETING YOU, CHRIS. I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW FOR ROUND TWO, OKAY?
LOOKING FORWARD TO IT. SEE YOU THEN.
BYE.
HELLO, CHRIS. HOW WAS YOUR FIRST DAY?
AHEM...OH, HI DOTTIE...UM... I GUESS OKAY, BUT WE DIDN'T MAKE MUCH MONEY.

THAT'S ALL RIGHT. THINGS WILL PICK UP. A TRUCK SHOULD BE BRINGING A NEW SHIPMENT ANY DAY NOW.
PFFPT-SSSS
WHAT?
OH, NOTHING. SORRY.
WELL THEN, LET'S CLOSE THIS PLACE UP.
THE LAST THING WE DO BEFORE WE LOCK THE DOORS IS PUT ALL THE CHAIRS ON TOP OF THE TABLES AND SWEEP UP.
BUT...UH...DOTTIE? THOSE ARE LARGE, CURVY-ARMED CAPTAIN'S CHAIRS. THEY LOOK TOO BIG TO PUT ON THOSE TABLES. HOW DO YOU STACK THEM?
PUT ONE UP AND THEN THE OTHER UPSIDE DOWN ON TOP OF IT. AND THEN DO IT AGAIN. FOUR PER TABLE. THAT'S SIMPLE, ISN'T IT?
THEY STILL DON'T LOOK LIKE THEY'D STAY UP THERE.
JUST DO IT, OKAY?
SURE-SURE, SORRY.
I BROKE FOUR KETCHUP BOTTLES THAT EVENING, AS THE "CAPTAINS" KEPT FALLING OFF THEIR PRECARIOUS PERCHES.
AAGH!
SPLAT!
OH NO!... NOT AGAIN!
SPLAT
OH, JEEZ. ...SORRY DOTTIE. I'LL CLEAN IT ALL UP.
SPLAT
SPLAT
I SURE HOPE THIS SEEMS FUNNY TO ME ONE DAY.
WELL, AT LEAST SARA WASN'T THERE TO WITNESS THE WHOLE THING. I DON'T THINK I WOULD HAVE EVER BEEN ABLE TO LIVE THAT ONE DOWN.

I ACTUALLY WORKED AT CHIPS AHOY FOR TWO WEEKS BEFORE I SHOWED UP AND FOUND THE PLACE LOCKED
I GUESS I WAS TOO NAIVE AT THE TIME TO REALIZE THAT IT HAD TO BELLY-UP SOONER OR LATER.
CLOSED
I CALLED SARA THAT EVENING, AND SHE TOLD ME THAT DOTTIE WENT BANKRUPT. SHE ALSO SAID WE WOULDN'T BE GETTING OUR LAST PAYCHECKS.--YEAH, RIGHT! IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN HER LAST, BUT IT WAS GONNA BE MY FIRST!
DAMN. NOW I'LL NEVER GET THAT MARSHALL STACK.
HANG IN THERE CHRISTO. IT'LL WORK OUT SOMEHOW, YOU'LL SEE.
EPILOGUE
WELL, SARA WAS RIGHT. WHEN SCHOOL STARTED UP AGAIN I GOT A JOB FILING RECORDS AFTER HOURS.
I PUT A DOWN PAYMENT ON THE MARSHALL, AND THE OWNER LET ME DO AN EXTENDED LAYAWAY FOR THE BALANCE.
AFTER SIX MONTHS, I FINALLY BROUGHT THE PRIZE HOME--MUCH TO THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF MY FATHER, WHO DREADED THE IDEA OF ANYTHING AMPLIFIED.
OH, DEAR. ...IT'S SO BIG.
AND THOUGH I'VE LONG SINCE RETIRED FROM THE CLUB CIRCUIT*...
Marshall
* ANOTHER STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME.
...THAT GOOD 'OL MARSHALL AND I...
...HAVE NEVER HAD A MORE LOYAL AUDIENCE THAN THE ONE WE HAVE TODAY.
8 BALL
THE END

THE STATE V.S. CHRIS STAROS
PART TWO
ALL RISE.
HAS THE JURY REACHED A VERDICT?
YES. YOUR HONOR, WE HAVE.
WOULD THE DEFENDANT PLEASE RISE.
YOU MAY READ THE VERDICT.
FOR THE CHARGE OF "LYING IN THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL-COMICS GENRE" WE FIND THE DEFENDANT... NOT GUILTY.
AH...
FOR THE CHARGE OF "EXAGGERATING FOR MONETARY PROFIT" WE ALSO FIND THE DEFENDANT... NOT GUILTY.
NO DUH. NO ONE'S EVER MADE A NICKEL OFFA INDY COMICS.
TAP TAP
I'LL HAVE ORDER IN THIS COURT.
AND FOR THE CHARGE OF "SEEKING NOTORIETY THROUGH AN OVERUSED GENRE" WE FIND THE DEFENDANT... GUILTY AS CHARGED.
OH MY GOD!...
YOU ARE AWARE, MR. STAROS, THAT THE CRIME OF "SEEKING NOTORIETY THROUGH AN OVERUSED GENRE" CARRIES A STIFF PENALTY.
YES, YOUR HONOR.
WELL THEN, IT GIVES ME NO PLEASURE TO DO THIS, BUT... I SENTENCE YOU TO FIVE MORE YEARS OF UNSUBSIDIZED SELF-PUBLISHING. NO PUBLISHER SHALL TOUCH YOUR WORK, AND ALL YOUR EXPENSES--INCLUDING POSTAGE--WILL BE BORNE SOLELY BY YOU.
YOU ARE HEREBY RELEASED ON YOUR OWN RECOGNIZANCE, CASE DISMISSED.
OH, THAT'S CRUEL.
HE'LL GO BANKRUPT BY CHRISTMAS FOR SURE.
NOW I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO GET PUBLISHED WITHOUT SPENDING MY OWN DAMN MONEY. THIS JUST AIN'T FAIR... GRUMBLE GRUMBLE... TWO GRAND AT THE POST OFFICE LAST YEAR ALONE...
THE END